SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 418. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 2ND, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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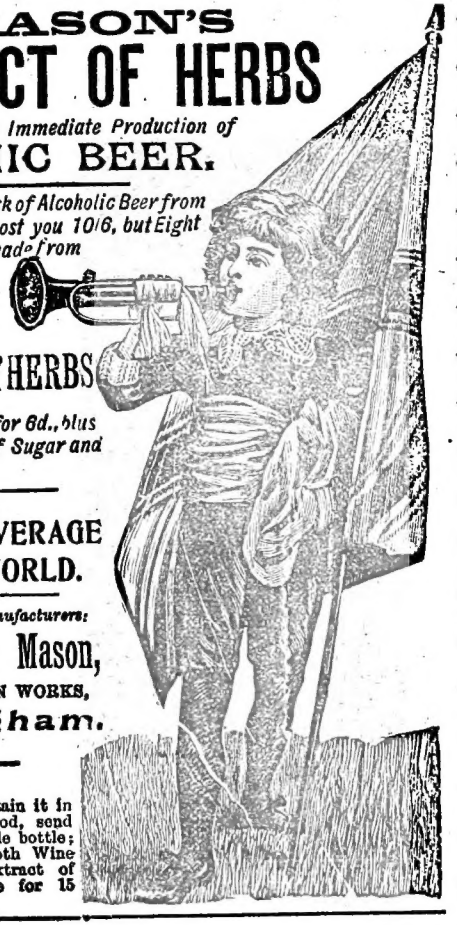

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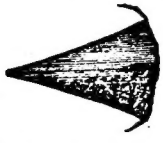

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No. 418.] [ONE PENNY.
For the Week ending January 2nd, 1897.

TEMPER AND MUSIC.

I.

"ARE you the inspector?"

"I am acting inspector for the night, sir."

"Can I speak to you privately for a few minutes?"

"Certainly, sir; if you'll just wait until I get a man here."

"My name is John Mayburn; I live at 2, Weston Square. This evening my wife and I had a tiff over some trivial matter—I really forget what it was about. We patched it up in the orthodox manner, and all was as usual until I, like a fool, reverted to some tabooed topic. My wife retaliated with interest, and smarting under the stings she was rubbing in one after the other, I forgot myself, and like a brute openly accused her of having more than a *penchant* for a man whose name I need not mention. She threatened to leave me, and I laughed at her, and—on my honour I only pretended to dare her, but she has gone.'

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"Oh, she'll come back soon, never fear, sir. Maybe she's home now."

"I am not so sanguine on that point. It is three hours since she left the house—and she took a lot of things with her, including all her jewels."

"Has she any relations near her, sir, or some friends she could stay the night with?"

"I don't think she has a single relation anywhere; at least, I have never heard her mention the fact, and we have no friends in London."

The sergeant acting as inspector had in his time been told similar tales. Some had turned out *bonâ fide*, others what he termed "frosts," one a murder. He looked this man hard in the face, and the mental calculation resulting from the scrutiny was that it was a real case or uncommon fine acting.

"I don't think much can be done to-night, sir; you see it is on the stroke of midnight, but you had better give me a description, and I'll see it sent to headquarters and they will circulate it. The men that come off night duty shall be questioned, and the ones going on told to make what inquiries they can. I don't know what else can be done. If she doesn't turn up by morning I would put a line or two in the papers. I will take her description down, sir."

"I don't exactly know how to describe a person."

"'Age, height, hair, complexion, clothes, the linen mark,' is our style, sir."

"She is twenty six or seven, about medium height, dark hair, pale, good mouth and teeth—dressed, I think, in dark brown or black coat and skirt, black hat with a few red flowers and things on it—patent boots. You see I did not think for a moment that she was really going, so took no notice."

"Well, sir, I hope you'll find her at home when you get there. In any case I should like you to call here as early as you can in the morning."

"Thank you, inspector, I will be here in good time."

"Humph!" mused the inspector, "men take their gruel very differently. Some come and expect us to turn night into day for 'em, as if we had the sun on tap. While some of 'em again, like this chap, go and make blithering idiots of themselves, and cause a shindy, and think we can bring their wounds together, like sticking-plaster. I'm sorry for this chap though. When they're quiet like him, you can always put a bit on it that it's a case of bein' hard hit."

To reach his house Mayburn had a mile of straight road to traverse, but crossed and re-crossed it a dozen times ere reaching home. He couldn't have defined his feelings as he let himself in—no, not if every earthly desire were at stake. He half-expected to find that his wife had returned, yet felt a dull, sinking sensation at his heart—a pain that became more acute when he knew he was alone.

He sat down determined to think of the best things to do, and the likeliest place his wife could have got to, but think! His mind was chaos. All he could understand was that his wife had left him through his brutality; and he loved her, positively adored her. What could he do? Wait. Ah yes, sit down and act the stoic. It is a mere matter of will power, but when a man is gradually working himself into a frenzy there is but one means of supplying a safety-valve, and that is walking, or running if you like, until, exhausted, nature collapses. The limited space of a room Mayburn found unbearable, so grasping a hat and jamming it tightly on, he quickly got into the street, and began the race against his mind. Without the slightest idea of destination, time, or his whereabouts, Mayburn kept on, as thousands of men have before, until the wearied body and mind united in their demand for rest.

Everything that was possible had been done, even to supplying the police with photographic duplicates, and yet it was six o'clock the next evening and no tidings. Mayburn was making a pretence at eating. He was really gazing at his printed message in the agony column of an evening paper, and wondering if *the* people ever saw those messages. After contemplating for some minutes, his attention was drawn to a paragraph at the bottom of another column:

FOUND DROWNED.—The dead body of a well-dressed woman was picked up by the river police this morning near Westminster Ferry. No papers or effects were found that might enable the police to trace the deceased's relatives, but she was dressed in a black coat and skirt, black stockings, and underclothes marked M.M. The body was taken to the mortuary pending identification.

"Madge! My God! I am a murderer."

As the policeman on duty at Westminster Bridge was going his rounds that night, he noticed a man leaning over the coping in a suspicious manner, so accosted him with the customary: "Move on, sir, please."

"I wasn't contemplating suicide, officer, I was envying those who have the courage to do it."

II.

"Oh, you positively must come, Mrs. Danvers; there will be quite a collection of lions, I can assure you, and we don't often have such golden opportunities in Liverpool."

"No, that is true, but it is such a bother, and I suppose I'm getting too old to care."

"Rubbish, too old indeed. Besides, that man who writes those charmingly sad stories, you know, will be there. What's his name?"

"Do you mean Saunders?"

"Yes. He wrote 'Coming'—a peculiar title, my dear, isn't it? and awfully sad, but very pretty. By-the-way, have you noticed that he always makes his heroines out such exquisite musicians? He is fond of music himself, I'm certain."

"Talking of music I had a strange experience to-day."

"Had you, dear? Do tell me all about it."

"I had occasion to go to my agent's this morning, and, contrary to custom, sent cook out to make a few household purchases. I met my agent by accident in Princes Road, consequently wasn't away from the house more than ten minutes. You can imagine my astonishment on my return to hear someone playing on the piano. It was my housemaid!"

"What impudence! Really, I don't know what servants are coming to. I should have dismissed her on the spot."

"I didn't. The front door was open and I crept softly to the drawing-room door, and stood there spell bound."

"You don't say so?"

"She was playing a most difficult piece of Chopin's, and I listened, and enjoyed it, and as she finished was about to enter the room and gently reprimand her, when she began playing the most dreamy thing I ever heard. I could have stayed there for hours listening, but she stopped suddenly, and I heard she was crying, so I crept out of my own house as quietly as I had entered."

"Dear me, most remarkable. Well, I must run away now, dear; remember I shall call for you and drag you to the Fishers' to-night."

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True to her threat the vivacious Mrs. Tarrant called to drag her victim to the great gathering of celebrities at the Fishers', but though the sightseers or hunters found the lions charming, the one supposed to have the finest mane in the company soon came to the conclusion that the whole show was insufferably slow. The Fishers were excellent types of the genus snob, and as the young author who wrote sad stories had to listen to the vapid conversation of three Fishers one after the other, he wished they had sailed away to the west before he had turned up, and utterly bored, made his excuses and left.

The night was fine and he was in no hurry, why not take a stroll in the park. No sooner thought of than acted upon, and Mr. Saunders strode out, only to reach the park gates to find them closed.

Few people cared to have their plans thwarted, but when a decision is suddenly made to do or see something in particular, it is the one thing for the moment that will give pleasure, and Mr. Saunders, vulgarly human, muttered a naughty word because he couldn't enter the park. Debating in his mind what to do, he stood there for some time, until the faint sound of music settled the question for him, and unwittingly he walked in the direction whence it came, and stopped opposite the house, listening.

Lost in reverie, he lived in the atmosphere of another world; scenes recurred to his memory that he had long wished were dead. It made him miserable and sad, yet he felt fascinated and showed no inclination to move until the last note had died away. As he turned to retrace his steps he met Mrs. Danvers face to face.

"So this is your press of work, Mr. Saunders, eh?"

"Must I admit that I was horribly bored by my host's daughters, and was glad of any excuse that would get me out? You were walking this way I think, Mrs. Danvers; may I see you to your house?"

"This is it, Mr. Saunders, thank you."

"Is it really? Do you know I've been at this gate quite half-an-hour, listening to some member of your family playing the most exquisite music."

"I have no family. You must have heard the housemaid."

"Hardly that, Mrs Danvers, it was a touch above even the latest up-to-date slavey."

"It is perfectly true; she plays simply divinely. Come in for a cup of tea to-morrow and you shall hear her."

The air must have been faintly tinged with frost, or some exhilarating wave passing over the southern part of Liverpool the next afternoon, for Mr. Saunders admitted to himself that it was ages since his spirits had been so buoyant, and the brisk pace he kept up soon took him to Bentley Road, where he found Mrs. Danvers gathering the last flowers of autumn.

"The musical maid will be bringing tea in just now, but as she doesn't know that I am aware of her accomplishment, can you suggest any means of getting her to play?"

This was a poser for Saunders, who thought the programme was all cut and dried.

"I can't just at the moment; perhaps if we wait a little an idea may occur."

"At all events we must have our tea first. I cannot do without mine, and really I often prefer my cup of tea in the afternoon to any other meal, I was going to say."

A gentle tap at the door, denoting the arrival of that delicious beverage, put a stop to any further remarks being made on the subject, and as the maid entered Mrs. Danvers looked in her direction, possibly with the idea of getting some inspiration concerning the forthcoming musical performance, certainly never anticipating what was to happen.

The approach of tea was heralded by a piercing shriek, the dropping of the tray and its contents, and the collapse of the housemaid.

Mrs. Danvers clutched the arms of her wicker chair and sat appalled, for Saunders had risen from his seat only to fall back into it fainting. She thought he was dead.

Contrary to the prevailing idea, it is at critical moments like this where a woman's nerve does not desert her. A second or two's frightened gaze, and Mrs. Danvers and the cook—who had come to see what was the matter—carried the maid to the nearest bedroom. Restoratives were applied, but nothing seemed capable of wresting her from the dead faint, and Mrs. Danvers was contemplating sending for medical aid, when Saunders walked deliberately into the room, pushed the cook to one side, and calmly lifted the lifeless form of the housemaid and kissed her—not once merely but several times, and the efficacy of the new treatment soon became obvious, for the patient sighed once or twice, then slowly opened her eyes, and Mrs. Danvers and the cook heard:

"My husband!"

"My darling wife!"

Mrs. Danvers at once beckoned to the cook, and the two left the room.

When the heart is light and happy, how beautiful everything seems, an indescribable charm pervades the very atmosphere, and, sunshine or rain, the world appears a glorious panorama, with no such things as partings or sorrow.

To such a world Mr. and Mrs. Mayburn awoke next morning. At the first glimmer of consciousness it all seemed like a dream, but the warm, gentle pressure of loving lips soon dispelled that nightmare.

"Oh, Jack, my own dear Jack, will you ever be able to forgive me, and forget that I ever left you?"

"My own sweet wife, it is I who have to be forgiven; can you for——"

Nothing further was actually said, but somehow a complete understanding was arrived at. Perhaps the method of interruption was partly, if not entirely responsible.

Jack, of course, explained how he had taken it for granted that the hapless creature found by the police was his wife; and she in her turn, why she preferred the menial duties of a servant to the unending drudgery of a governess.

"Tell me just once more, Jack, that you never meant what you said that night, and that you are sure I have been true to you."

"You know I never meant it, sweetheart. Oh, I was mad and wicked, but God knows I've been punished."

"You poor dear; well, let us forget the past and live only in the present and the future."

"Kiss me, my beloved."

And the compact was sealed.

C. ENGLAND COWAN.

One rode a horse, the other rhododendron.

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The Story of Mag.

JUST above this little mountain village there is a place known as Lost Creek waterfall. The name is not a specially romantic one, but it has at least the merit of describing the place which it designates.

Lost Creek is a typical mountain stream that comes roaring, brawling down the mountain until it reaches a certain high cliff, over which it plunges in a graceful, quivering column. It throws up a shower of silvery spray from the rocks below, but instead of flowing on down the surface of the mountain it plunges into a dark, small-mouthed, subterranean cavern and is in all verity "lost" to human sight, as the name implies. Occasionally a wayfarer will throw a stone inside and listen to the hollow thud, thud, as it seems to bound from ledge to ledge into the awful darkness of the earth's interior.

Almost half a mile farther down the mountain the stream emerges from its underground course as abruptly as it disappeared. There are vague rumours that soldiers, hard pressed by their foes, traversed this awful passageway during the dark days of the War, but these are only rumours, and no one now cares by actual test to prove or disprove their possibility.

Only one person is really known to have passed through this journey, and that one brought no news as to its mysteries. The lips were sealed for ever, and the eyes, unwavering, stared up at the sun above them. The memory of the awful exit gives the subterranean passageway a horror deeper than its own, but the self-engrossing heroism of the entrance gives the waterfall a grandeur greater than that of its rocks, purer than the snowy whiteness of its foam, and more soul-refreshing than the coolness of its spray.

Tom Houston was one of the pleasantest, most industrious young farmers on that slope of Cumberland mountain, and Mag Lassiter was one of the wildest, most worthless of the mountain belles. The neighbours all said a great deal of good about Tom and very little of bad, beyond the fact that he was rather easily influenced. The best that could be said about Mag was that she was pretty and full of life, and that she generally stuck to her friends through thick and thin—as long as she cared to.

As to the evil said about her, there was almost no end to it.

The whisperings that connected her name with certain moonshining operations could hardly be included under this head, for public opinion on the mountains in those days was far from unanimous in declaring such things evil. Far more serious were the rumours that she had used the power of her beauty to lure numerous young men on to destruction. Many rather serious misdeeds were supposed to have their origin with her influence, but nothing definite was ever known about them. When she first began to make friends with Tom Houston, everybody said that no good could come of it. Several of the older men and women took it on themselves to warn Tom, but he refused to be warned. As usual, the voice of youth and life and beauty had more influence than the voice of old age and experience and ugliness.

The crash came sooner than anyone expected. One night, at a dance, Tom called out the two Dickens' boys, and, seemingly in cold blood, shot them dead.

The Dickens' boys were members of one of the most prominent families on the mountain, and the excitement which followed the killing was intense. Everybody remembered that Mag had formerly had a fierce quarrel with the elder of the brothers, and that he was said to be the only young man on the mountain who had successfully resisted her wiles. Everybody suspected that the murder was instigated by Mag, but nobody knew it. Only Tom Houston could know it, and it was recognised by all that Tom would never tell. Besides, after the killing, Tom had fled and was now somewhere in hiding.

There was reason to believe that he had not gone far

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"Gimme fifty dollars."

away, but it was hard to find him. The mountain was thoroughly aroused. The prominence of the murdered men and the cold-bloodedness of the deed made everyone feel an interest in bringing the slayer to justice. Pickets were scattered in a line that surrounded the whole of the mountain where Tom was supposed to be hiding, but still the task was no easy one. The mountain side at that place was so full of deep ravines and holes in the rocks, that a dozen men might easily elude anything but the most careful search. Still, it was only a question of time.

One evening, several days after the killing, Mag walked into the sheriff's office at Jasper. Without even glancing at the group of loungers hanging about as usual, she looked defiantly at the sheriff and addressed him in harsh, strident tones, very unlike those in which she generally spoke.

"I've come to tell you that your men has got Tom Houston penned safe an' sound," she said. "Thar ain't no possible way out for him. I guess you already knowed that, though."

"I sorter guessed it," replied the sheriff, as he chuckled and looked round in some uncertainty.

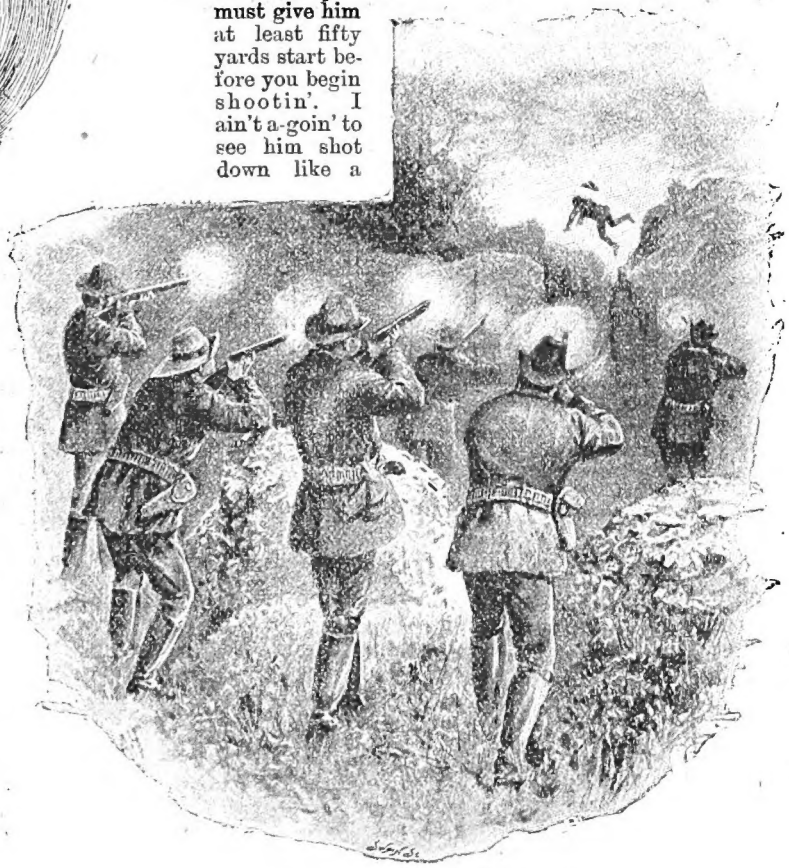
"Ef you think you'll have an easy job to take him you're mistaken, though," continued Mag. "That mounting is as full of little gullies an' holes as an old kitchen is of rat holes, an' no man in Tennessee knows 'em better than Tom does. It may be a month before you catch him. Besides, Tom's got shootin' irons, an' he knows how to use 'em, too. There'll be the devil to pay before you take him unless you get help."

"Help?" repeated the sheriff rather vaguely. "Ain't I got half the men on the mounting to help me now? What kind of help do you mean?"

"Gimme fifty dollars, an' I'll take you right where he is to-morrow mornin', an' I'll gyarantee he don't fire nary shot neither."

The sheriff uttered a low, long-drawn whistle of surprise, and the longers about the office exchanged remarks in an undertone. They had always known "that gal was no good, but darned if they'd ever have believed she was low down enough to get a fellow into trouble an' then sell his life to the officers for fifty dollars, darned if they would."

"There's some conditions about it," continued Mag haughtily and without heeding these comments. "Them fifty dollars must be in my hand in bills in the mornin' before I budge any step of the way. After I take you where he is you must give me two minutes by the watch to talk to him before you do anything. Then, if he tries to run, you must give him at least fifty yards start before you begin shootin'. I ain't a-goin' to see him shot down like a



The figure made a final leap.

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The watchers gazed at the placid features.

dog without no chance at all. After it's all over I'm goin' to leave this here country myself, an' you've got to promise me that nobody'll try to foller or to see which way I've gone."

"I don't blame her for that last part," whispered a bystander, winking significantly.

The sheriff thought the matter over. He went out and talked to several of the friends of the murdered man about it. All agreed that Mag's plan, though an unspeakably base one on her part, might result in saving several weeks of time and possibly several human lives. Perhaps it was the cheapest way out of the difficulty. Old man Dickens readily agreed to furnish the money. The result of the consultation was that Mag was informed that her terms were accepted.

The next morning, before sunrise, when Mag met the sheriff's posse at the meeting point agreed upon the evening before, it was noticed that she had a big, black bruise under her right eye.

"Have you been in a scrape, Mag?" asked one of the posse, with a clumsy attempt at jocularity.

"I seen Tom last night," replied the girl, with a forced laugh, "an' he whacked me in the eye with his fist an' cussed me for gettin' him into trouble, as he said. I didn't mind the lick—but the cussin'."

Here the girl's voice quavered, and those nearest to her thought they saw the glimmer of a tear in her eye.

"I soon made it all right with him though," she continued, regaining her self-possession. "But I didn't tell him what a nice lot of visitors I was goin' to bring him this morning. He, he!"

There were some black looks exchanged and some remarks made in an undertone as to the baseness of the girl's treachery, but she deigned no reply until she came within hearing of the Lost Creek waterfall, to which reference has been made before.

"Call in all your pickets," she exclaimed imperiously. "Tom's mighty nigh here somewheres, an' you is such pore shots that you'd better have a lot of men ready to shoot."

The pickets had spent the night before on the mountain as they had also spent several nights preceding. Word was now sent out, and all of them were summoned down to the spot in question.

"Now stay where you are an' remember about them two minutes you promise to give us—for our last interview, you know. He, he!"

With these words Mag cautiously advanced until within about fifty yards of the fall. Then she stepped out of sight between several large boulders. The posse grasped their rifles and waited in silence. The sheriff held in hand a watch with which to tell the passage of the two minutes.

"Do you reckon he's been hidin' all this time in that hole?" asked one man in a low whisper.

"What do you reckon she's a-sayin' to him?" asked another.

Then all was quiet save for the "tick, tick" of the sheriff's watch. When the time lacked but a few seconds of being out, a woman's figure hurriedly glided from behind the rocks and hastened up the mountain side. The left hand pressed a handkerchief to the eyes, but the right hand pointed backwards towards the rocks. Scarcely a moment later a man's figure emerged and made a wild dash for Lost Creek waterfall.

Perhaps it was the recollection of their promise, or perhaps it was only the suddenness of the apparition; at any rate, not a shot was fired until the figure made a final leap before disappearing into the deep, dark hole into which the water fell. Just as it was poised in mid-air, half-a-dozen rifles rang out loud and clear. High above the multitudinous mountain echoes, which they awoke, a wild, shrill scream arose. Every man in

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the posse rushed pell-mell to the black hole, but when they peered into its depths nothing was to be seen and nothing was to be heard save the roar of the fall and the swish of the foam.

"Those rocks on that side would give a fellow plenty of foothold," remarked one man to the sheriff. "Air yo' a-goin' in?"

"Naw!" answered that official. "I ain't hankering to run afoul of Tom Houston's shootin' irons in the dark."

However, he put his face in at the dark opening and shouted, "Surrender!" though his voice was well nigh drowned by that of the water. Then very cautiously he pushed a big revolver into the darkness and pulled the trigger. A long, cavernous bellow was the only response.

"Jeeminy!" he ejaculated. "It sounds like a million of devils might live down there."

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"See here," he shouted. "About half of you fellows run down the mountain—quick, an' stand guard at the place where Lost Creek comes out again."

His meaning was comprehended in an instant, and about half the posse dashed away to execute his orders.

"So that was Mag's little game, was it?" continued the sheriff. "She thought I'd call in my picket lines an' then Tom could slip out the lower end of this hole—guess nobody knows it better than him, an' she'd have her fifty dollars besides. She was sharp to get her money beforehand. I wonder where she is now?"

She was nowhere to be seen. It seemed that during the tumult she had slipped away unobserved. The sheriff made no attempt to follow her; perhaps he remembered his promise not to do so.

"It don't make no difference," he remarked. "We've got Tom in a hole this time sure, with both ends of the hole guarded. It's only a question of a little time now. If we don't drive him out, we can easily starve him out. I think some fellow winged him when he jumped anyhow."

That night three men with rifles in their hands stood guard at the lower opening of the underground passageway of Lost Creek, and three stood at the upper one. The next day they were relieved by others, and so it continued for a full week. Tom Houston did not appear. One afternoon at the end of this period Tom's big peaked slouch hat floated out into the sunlight at the lower entrance. The watchers examined it with all the eagerness of intense excitement.

"Somethin' else is goin' to float out pretty soon now," exclaimed one in an awestruck whisper.

Sure enough, not half-an-hour later "something else" did float out.

"Look out! It's comin'," exclaimed the first one who saw it.

As it reached the first faint rays of daylight the watchers peering in could recognise the well-worn suit of "butternut" jeans which Tom Houston had been used to wear. When it reached the full light of day, they saw that a wealth of soft brown hair had fallen back from the marble brow of a woman.

They had to take a second glance to realise that it was Mag. The old, radiant beauty was unconquered even by death, but the old look of haughty defiance was gone, and in its place was a look of tender restfulness that was new to them. The only sign of a struggle was the black welt on the face where Tom had struck her when she went to him to unfold her plan for saving his life. As the watchers gazed at the placid features the various details of her self-sacrifice came to them one at a time.

"I bet she had him hid in this place all along," whispered one. "The only trouble was that the lines was drawed so tight around that she couldn't get him out."

"She changed clo'es with him mighty quick that evenin'," said another.

"Tom slipped off with her clothes on, but I bet she had some others hid out somewheres for him to put on. I wouldn't doubt but she gave him them fifty dollars to go on. Lord knows where he is by this time—in Halifax mebby."

HERBERT FLAXMAN.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION. No. 25.

THE Provincial Guinea last week was won by Mr. F. Hutchinson, Church Street, Bingham, Notts; and the London Guinea by Mr. W. H. Holton, 26, Holles Street, Newcastle Street, Strand, W.C.

POST-CARD COMPETITION.—No. I.

NEW SERIES.

A Prize of Two Guineas is offered to the reader of SHORT STORIES who sends us the best anagram on the words, "A Happy New Year."

Competition closes on Monday, January 4th.

Post-cards only, please.

Jumbled Story Competition.—26.

ON page 15 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *January 4th,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the first of the readers living in Ireland who succeeds in forwarding the correct, or most nearly correct, solution.

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THE APPLE TREE.

A Study of Murder.

JACQUES was not a bad sort of fellow, although somewhat hasty and little disposed to resist a first impulse. A hard-working student-at-law, imbued with Schopenhauer's philosophy, life was a perpetual struggle for him; his penniless condition obliging him to give lessons, and, as often as not, go dinnerless and supperless to bed.

Still, life had not absolutely soured him, and at heart he remained a good fellow. The burden of existence, however, at this particular moment began to seem almost too heavy for him to bear, and at times he rebelled against his destiny in a way—as the sequel will show—that was perhaps slightly exaggerated.

One summer's evening—it was a Saturday—both purse and stomach being empty, Jacques, being filled with rage at the thought that he would, for lack of a few napoleons, be unable to take part in an excursion planned for the morrow, started off through the streets of Paris, going on aimlessly and steadily straight before him, right through the suburbs, till he finally found himself, at eight o'clock at night, on a long, bare road in the plain of Aubervilliers—a road that looked like a white chalk line on blank darkness.

Then, as ill-luck would have it, great drops of rain began to fall, and peals of thunder burst forth. Jacques was no coward, neither was he troubled by conscience; indeed, he cared little about the thunder, but he was annoyed at the rain drenching his clothes—valuable from a monetary point of view—and his skin, frail protection against pneumonia. No shelter within sight, right and left of the road; nothing but the bare, gloomy plain.

At last he saw a tree—a lonely apple tree—a good-natured sort of tree that bent over on one side rather like a tipsy man with his hat askew. Jacques greeted the tree with affection, and crouched under its protecting branches.

The storm increased. Jacques felt exasperated against his bad luck. He felt as though Nature itself rose up against him, and he shook his fist at the dark skies.

"Brr! Brr! What weather!" growled a fresh arrival, taking refuge also under the tree on the opposite side of Jacques, whom he had not noticed. This man had evidently been dining, and seemed to be a horse-dealer who had just concluded a bargain, for he muttered between his teeth:

"This is jolly, indeed. Nice fellows those, making me drink and then going off with my carriage. Fancy having to walk home in such weather, and with a lot of money, too."

Jacques was not a bad fellow; it seems necessary to repeat this, for some doubts may perhaps arise on that point.

Hearing the muttered observations of the stranger, and convinced that even with the most exquisite and insinuating politeness he would fail to obtain a loan from him, Jacques softly went round the tree, seized him by the throat, and, being very powerful, strangled him. This preliminary affair accomplished, he took the man's purse, emptied it into his own pocket, threw it on the ground near the body, and, as it was getting late, started off in the direction of Paris.

The apple tree, which had remained motionless during this episode, now started off in his wake.

It is not strictly customary for an apple tree to follow a man who has just strangled another; it would, therefore, be somewhat unjust to Jacques to accuse him of cowardice on the pretext that he was slightly surprised.

Hearing behind him a trailing sound of roots on the road, he turned and saw the tree.

"Dear me," he said; "how muddled my brain is! Want of habit, no doubt. Shall soon feel all right."

He resumed his walk, and the tree continued to follow.

"Either I am mad," thought Jacques, "or what is now taking place is some unexplained manifestation of natural forces. I shall soon find out, for it is not likely that the custom-house officers, who are sensible men, will allow an apple tree to pass by without notice."

At the city gates, the officials did not even move aside. The apple tree did not seem to heed them, and Jacques and the tree found themselves, one behind the other, in the streets of Paris.

Jacques resumed his meditations.

"Thus," he said, "it is evident that this apple tree is the visible form of remorse, just as Banquo appeared to Macbeth, and the Commander to Don Juan. This hallucination is the more extraordinary that I do not feel any remorse. Really, this tree has a disregard for all tradition, Never mind; I have got the money. I shall sleep soundly, and to-morrow morning the apple tree will have returned to its proper place. You may consider yourself a failure, my dear fellow!"

He had, you see, a calm mind, and knew how to rise to an emergency. He hurried on, not to escape from his apple tree, which appeared to have indefatigable roots, but in order to get sooner to bed.

At last he reached his hotel—Rue de Seine. As he paused at the door he wondered if the tree would come in also, and felt a kind of interest about it, as he reflected that the narrow passage would certainly crush its branches.

He rang, opened and closed the door. The apple tree remained outside. Jacques smiled, not that the tree bothered him, but he thought of his landlady, who objected to strangers at night.

In his room, Jacques, by the glimmer of a candle, counted his money, and found that the little operation had brought him in some nine hundred francs. It could not be considered a bad business.

Suddenly he felt a pang at not having thought of his apple tree, which, in truth, had most discreetly played the part of avenger, and, raising the blind, he looked out of the window. The tree was on the pavement, calmly gliding up and down. Jacques noticed that it even politely moved aside to allow people to pass.

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ONE
Rode a Horse
THE OTHER
Rhododendron

A £20 Prize

See current number of *Pearson's Weekly*.

Jacques went to bed and slept soundly.

At nine o'clock he awoke. Some one was loudly knocking at his door. He rose, his eyes heavy with sleep. His friends had come to fetch him for the projected excursion which had necessitated this acquirement of funds. Joyfully he opened to them, and they began joking while he dressed. He slipped some gold pieces into his pocket and gaily went downstairs.

The apple tree, which was respectfully waiting on the pavement, immediately began to follow him like a well-trained lackey. Jacques smiled to it, like an old acquaintance. The whole party went off and took a morning glass. Jacques treated the others, and the sight of his money was hailed by joyous acclamations.

"Waiter," said Jacques, "give my apple tree a glass."

The waiter, not understanding, looked annoyed; he thought he was being chaffed. Jacques roared with laughter; he thought, however, that the tree had, by a slight wave of a branch, made a gesture of refusal. No doubt it was a sober tree, or at least one that took nothing in the morning.

The party decided upon going to Nogent-sur-Marne. Jacques suggested taking a cab to the station.

"Now you'll have to stir your stumps," said Jacques to his apple tree, giving it a friendly nudge.

Impossible. The apple tree stood on the edge of the pavement while they clambered up, then it followed the cab at a jog trot. Leaning out of the window, Jacques watched it. At one moment he uttered a scream. His tree had nearly been run over. Luckily it was able to get out of the way in time.

"What on earth is the matter with you?" inquired his friends.

"Don't mind me," he replied; "it is my apple tree."

"His apple tree—his apple tree again!"

At the station the tree did not lose its way. Jacques began to think it was really cruel to wear out his tree; he was getting quite fond of it. But he was soon reassured, for the apple tree got on to the platform—without a ticket, the scamp!—and, keeping up good traditions, remaining at the side of the carriage, prancing like a body-guard following a king's coach.

Jacques, however, absorbed in his apple tree, rather neglected the amiable ladies of the company, one of whom, having a tender feeling for him, reproached him with his inattention.

"Are you jealous of my apple tree?" he said laughingly.

"Apple tree! apple tree!" all his companions began singing to a popular tune. They even improvised words which Jacques feared might wound his apple tree. But the tree maintained a calm and well-bred impassibility.

On arrival there was a terrible crush; Jacques almost lost his apple tree, but it is most convenient to have a tall friend in the crowd. He saw it cleverly extricate itself, and faithfully resume its post.

They all went to a restaurant on the banks of the Marne. Jacques now really felt uncomfortable; was it not most improper, anti-democratic, for him selfishly to seat himself on a comfortable terrace and leave his apple tree alone on the road, strolling about, with its branches crossed behind its back? Nevertheless, Jacques did not dare to move.

The talk grew loud, merry, and noisy, wine flowed freely, and Jacques felt a delightful sensation of comfort after the period of sad privations he had recently gone through. He even became rather over-excited, but that was really excusable; not every day do you strangle a horse-dealer, nor have an apple tree kicking its heels in front of your eating-house. His excessive boisterousness was therefore to be excused; moreover, his friends of both sexes did not fail to keep him company. Generously he flung a glass of champagne on to the boughs of his apple tree.

"Let us hire a boat," said his companions, "and go to the island."

"No, no," cried Jacques tearfully; "perhaps it can't swim!"

"Who—what—cannot swim?"

"My apple——"

"Apple tree! Apple tree! This is a joke; bravo!"

Jacques flushed. Would these fellows never understand? He looked at the apple tree to ask its opinion, and thought it did not seem to dread a little swim, glad, no doubt, to refresh its roots.

The boat was unfastened. The tree jumped gracefully from the bank and floated on the water. Jacques followed it with his eyes, ready to hold out an oar if necessary.

In the evening Jacques was abominably drunk. He screamed to his friends:

"You annoy and bore me! Your society is odious to me! I shall go off with my apple tree."

They laughed, strove to detain him, but in vain. The ladies, vexed, pouted. He, ungrateful fellow, did not care a bit. It was pitch dark; he went along the bank, accompanied by his apple tree.

For hours Jacques wandered on, following his apple tree, and at last it led him back to the plain of Aubervilliers. There the apple tree stopped; it was at home.

* * * * *

The next morning, as two gendarmes were riding over the plain of Aubervilliers, the private said to his comrade:

"Look at that apple tree, where the horse dealer was murdered! There is something hanging to its branches, and it is not apples!"

They approached and examined the apple tree.

The thing which was hanging from its branches was a body.

The body was the body of Jacques.

LE VIER.

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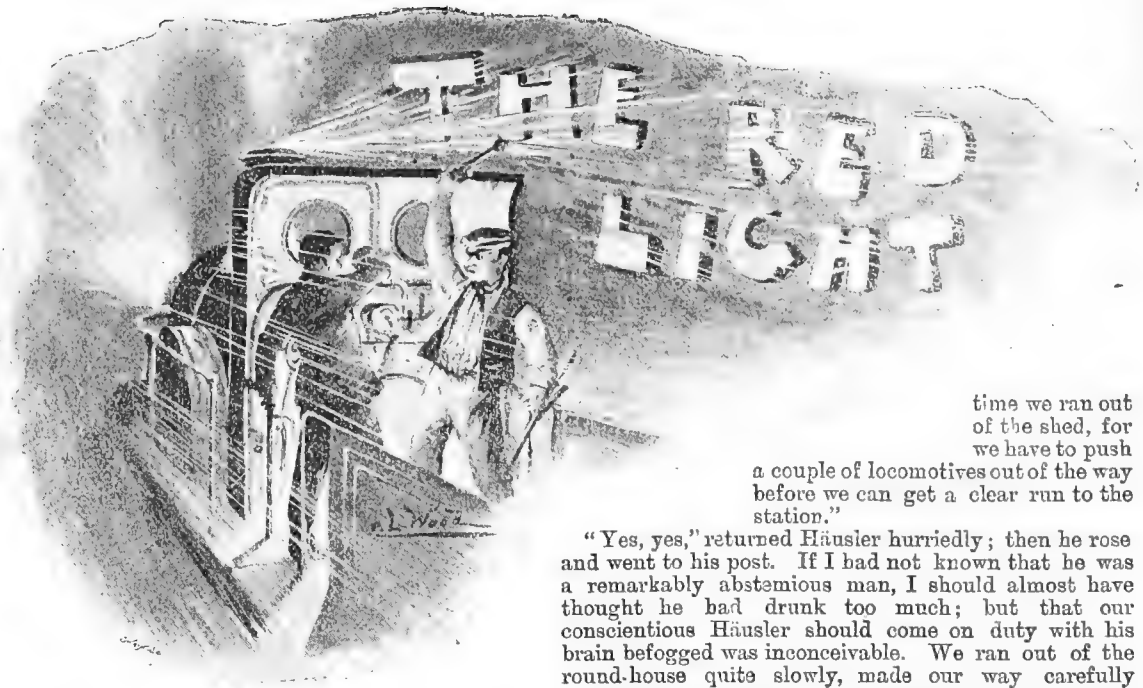

Two years ago I qualified as stoker, and together with the driver, Häusler, ran the Berlin-Vienna express on the Berlin-Falkenberg division. Our train left the Central Station at 5.30 in the afternoon, and on that particular day I was in the round-house at three o'clock to see that the fires were good and everything in running order. According to rules, the driver had to be in the round-house an hour before the departure of the train, and usually Häusler complied with the greatest punctuality.

Nevertheless, to-day it was a quarter to five and still he had not come. I tried the sandbox, the two steam pumps that force the water from the tender into the boiler, and saw diligently to the fire, which required to be in the best possible condition if we were to make the required run of ninety-one minutes in the given time. We could not allow ourselves full speed until we had passed the station Grosz-Lichterfelde. Then there were still almost sixty-two miles in a stretch, and only at the larger stations through which we passed was it necessary to slacken our speed.

It was nearing five, and still no sign of Häusler. I had come to the conclusion that he was ill or that some accident had happened to him, and was just on the point of going to the superintendent of the locomotive house and reporting the case to him when I saw Häusler approaching in considerable haste. He gave me a hurried nod and merely asked if everything were ready. Then he mounted the locomotive and tried all the valves for himself, but while at other times he made this most important inspection of the locomotive with great care, to-day he did it hastily and with a lack of attention. In the midst of his inspection he stopped suddenly and seated himself upon the tool-chest which is attached to the tender. For a good five minutes he sat staring blankly before him; then he laughed outright and asked me again: "Is everything ready, Max?"

"Of course, Herr Häusler," I replied. "It's about time we ran out of the shed, for we have to push a couple of locomotives out of the way before we can get a clear run to the station."

"Yes, yes," returned Häusler hurriedly; then he rose and went to his post. If I had not known that he was a remarkably abstemious man, I should almost have thought he had drunk too much; but that our conscientious Häusler should come on duty with his brain befogged was inconceivable. We ran out of the round-house quite slowly, made our way carefully between the locomotives and, according to orders, stood outside the station at ten minutes before the train was to start, not having coupled as yet. We had a good head of steam and all the valves let off the superfluous vapour.

"How is your wife?" I asked to rouse Häusler from his lethargy.

"My wife?" he asked with a start. "She is very well, very well, she knows nothing yet."

"Has something unpleasant happened to you, Herr Häusler?"

"Unpleasant to me? No, I know of nothing. Did I say anything? It was only a way I have of talking, and my wife must not know about it."

Two great tears rolled down his cheeks, but he turned quickly away to hide his sobs from me. I was at a loss to understand his behaviour, but, after a few seconds, he turned to me again and his face was calm, even sinister.

"Don't you feel well?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied hastily, "I am very well, very well indeed."

The three strokes of the bell announced the time for departure; the twice-repeated signal of the guard gave us the order to start. Häusler woke out of his reverie, gave the whistle of response, and then, as deftly as ever, he set the train in motion.

Unless some accident should occur we would make our ninety-one minutes. It was exactly 7.1 when we at last pulled up in Herzburg, and punctually at 7.11 we steamed into Falkenberg. We were uncoupled and ran upon a siding, four minutes later the train sped on its way. We ran our locomotive first to the water crane, and filled for the return trip; then we took in coal and ran upon the turn-table to be set right for the whole run. Lastly, we ran across on a siding, and after Häusler had fulfilled his duty as driver he went into the engineers' house to rest a bit.

I had to stay upon the engine, but could take a little

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turn off for relaxation, thanks to the polisher. The fire and boiler were kept low so that it did not go out and could be brought to a full heat a half hour before starting. The machine could not run away, for it stood on a "dead" track and the pressure of steam was lowered so quickly that I was safe in leaving it to the care of the polisher.

It was an hour after our arrival, when I went into the engineers' quarters and hunted up Häusler in the large waiting-room. The engineers' room in Falkenberg is fitted up with tables, chairs, and some sleeping couches. There is a small library at hand from which one can inform himself by various technical works, and Häusler formerly made use of this library to study different treatises on locomotive construction, the science of mechanics, and so on.

To-day I found him busy writing. There were, besides ourselves, two drivers who lay upon the couches asleep. Häusler wrote with a speed which I was not accustomed to see in him. He nodded to me as I entered, and went on with his writing. I thought I noticed that the letter upon which he was engaged, and which already covered at least three octavo sheets, concerned large sums of money, and the name Rothschild, too, I observed repeatedly.

I asked Häusler whether he would not take a little something in the way of refreshment. He was never, as I have said before, inclined to be dissipated; but he was accustomed to drink at least one glass of beer and eat a trifle, because he did not get home to supper until eleven o'clock. To-day, however, he refused, explaining:

"I have no money. I shall, in fact, have to go hungry, for I cannot eat again. Everything is gone, quite gone."

This manner of talking naturally struck me as strange. It was not intended as a joke, for Häusler did not look as if he could joke. But if it were meant in earnest it gave me cause to fear for Häusler's reason, and the uneasiness which had taken possession of me increased.

I could only stay in the engineers' room long enough to get a bite to eat and a glass of beer; then I had to go back to my engine to start the fire into fresh life and get up the pressure of steam. I threw coal into the fire-box, raked the fire until it burned briskly, and had steam up again in a short time. When it came time to run across to the metals where we were to be coupled to the Vienna express, I sent the polisher to Häusler, for the latter, contrary to his custom, did not appear of his own accord. He did not test the working of the feeding pumps or valves either, as was his wont. He seemed to-day to rely entirely upon me and my conscientiousness.

The train came promptly into Falkenberg a little before nine o'clock, and the change of locomotives had to be made as quickly as possible. The train was full of passengers, and had over a dozen carriages.

As far as Herzberg we ran at a normal rate in twelve minutes. Then to Jüterbog we had fifteen minutes, and I noticed the constantly growing agitation on the part of Häusler. He talked to himself, flung out angry words which sounded sometimes like a curse, gesticulated violently with his hands, and seemed to forget entirely where we were.

Through the three intervening stations to Jüterbog we ran at a terrific rate, with no slackening of speed. I did not dare to call Häusler's attention to the gauge, for on this point he was very sensitive; but when, before reaching the Jüterbog station, we received the telegraphic signal to slow up, and Häusler did not mind in the least, I stepped up beside him and turned the lever a little myself, for otherwise we would not under any circumstances have been able to bring the train to a standstill in the station. Whereupon Häusler closed the regulator himself and kept his place doggedly at the step.

At 9.52 we pulled out of Jüterbog, and fourteen minutes later drew up in Lückenwald. Contrary to his deportment on the preceding trip, Häusler had become very quiet, but his face darkened perceptibly, and when, shortly before coming to the station, I reached for the throttle, thinking that Häusler would again forget to slow up the train, I received from him a rough push, and his voice was raised to almost a scream as he called to me: "What do you want? That is my business!"

The stop of a minute at Lückenwald was utilised by me to put on fresh coal; then we sped away again. Nearly thirty-one miles, that is, half the run to Berlin, now lay before us. Häusler was at his post. Suddenly he laid hold of my arm and said:

"Did you see him?"

"Whom?" I asked in astonishment.

"He looked out of the coupé in Falkenberg," said Häusler. "He comes from Vienna, and I've got him this time."

"Whom do you mean?" I asked, naturally surprised.

"Rothschild," said Häusler. "He is coming from Vienna to carry off the gold that he has stolen from me, and now he intends to carry me off, too. But I have got him fast this time. Throw on coal. We need steam!"

I opened the door of the fire-box and saw that enough coal had been put on.

"It's not yet time to throw on more, Herr Häusler!" I exclaimed.

In a rage he seized the wrench by means of which one opens the self-closing door of the fire-box, and exclaimed angrily:

"Shovel in the coal, I need more steam. I am going to run straight through Berlin, directly into the sea. There I will drown Rothschild, and then he shall not take my gold again. Will you obey me or not?"

Häusler seized a double-screw wrench which hung within reach, raised it aloft, and looked as if he would strike me down. I threw on coal until Häusler cried:

"Enough, for the time. But look after the fire; I need sixty atmosphere pressure. We are going to run three hours yet, without stopping."

Any man is likely to find it uncomfortable to be alone with a person in whom he suddenly discovers traces of insanity. But the matter becomes somewhat graver and more complicated when one is in the company of a madman upon an express locomotive which is forging ahead with a velocity of fifty-six miles an hour. I will add, here, that I did not tremble for my own life, but I thought with terror of the three hundred passengers behind us, who had no suspicion of the danger which hovered over them. The driver, out of his mind, as it appeared, standing close to the brink of insanity, and determined, under no circumstances, to bring the train to a stop at the terminal station at Berlin, but to forge ahead with it; that is, to cause a catastrophe in which probably half the passengers would meet their death.

Of what use was it for me to try to force Häusler from his position at the decisive hour, and bring the locomotive to a standstill? He would strike me down if I merely reached out a hand. I looked at his eyes, flaming with anger, as he watched me suspiciously. I

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might gesticulate, and call ever so loudly, to draw the attention of the officials in the station through which we passed. It would be of no avail, for only one man could stop the train, and that was Häusler, the mad driver.

At first I was as one paralysed; but then I told myself it was sheer cowardice to give everything up for lost. I would gladly have talked to Häusler, but I knew not what I ought to say. I should only provoke him by opposition, and to begin an indifferent conversation—that was a task to which I did not feel myself equal. Nevertheless, I must do something to divert his attention from me. He continued to regard me with the suspicion that is peculiar to all demented persons, and only ordered me now and then in crisp words to throw fresh coal into the fire-box. The iron wrench he held firmly, and every time he gave me the command to throw on coal, he raised it threateningly. It was necessary for me to calm him and distract his attention because my aim was to get possession of the two screw-bars which lay in the chest behind me. There was no other possibility of saving the train and passengers than to strike Häusler down at the critical moment.

God knows it came hard enough for me to fell to the floor like a wild beast a man whom I honoured and loved. But when it was a question of the rescue of three hundred human beings, there could be no room for hesitation.

Ludingsfelde was passed; we had nearly fifteen miles yet to make, and, before I slew, perhaps, twenty minutes of time.

I shall never forget how frightfully absurd, in spite of the horror of the situation, I seemed to myself when I addressed to Häusler the remark:

"It is cooler than usual this evening."

Häusler cast a look of distrust upon me and was silent.

"Your wife will be waiting for you at the station," I remarked, as calmly as possible.

"That's no matter!" he exclaimed. "I shall run through, I shall run straight through at one stretch into the North Sea. I shall not stop again."

"Won't your wife wonder at it?" I asked, as innocently as I could.

"Of course, she will wonder," said Häusler, laughing. "But when she sees Rothschild in the train she will wonder no longer. She will know then that I am going to drown him. Besides, we shall return at once. She will only be kept waiting half-an-hour."

We flew past Groszbeeren without lessening in the slightest degree the speed of the train. We were nearing Grosslichterfelde, where, owing to our being ahead of time, we might easily find a Berlin local standing on the metals. The train had been announced from the last station, and the signal "open" was up. Enveloped in a thick cloud of dust, which had been whirled up by our wild flight, we rushed through this place also. The engine, as it passed through Herztucke and Weichenkreuze, seemed to make veritable leaps.

Like a vision Lichterfelde, with its houses, flew past, and we sped onward towards the large Berlin station whose hundreds of lights gleamed far ahead of us.

I looked out towards the right, and thought I could not be deceived when I noted in the far distance the red light of the danger signal for our train. We stood on the verge of catastrophe; in a few seconds not only my own fate, but that of the three hundred passengers behind me would be decided.

Plainly I saw the signal "stop" for our train; the station was not free to us.

I could feel that my hair was standing erect on my head with fright and apprehension. I became in a certain sense, insane myself.

With mad swiftness we were nearing the danger signal. I seized Häusler's arm and cried with an awful voice in his ear:

"Red light!" (*roth Licht.*)

Häusler stared at me, and then cried:

"Rothschild! Where is he?"

"Red light, there ahead!" I shouted again, with all the force of my lungs.

"Rothschild, there ahead!" said Häusler after me.

Then with a piercing yell he suddenly broke away and swung himself out upon the narrow gallery which runs along the locomotive's boiler, and is provided with a railing. He supposed, in his madness, that his enemy, Rothschild, was there in front of us, and wished to get at him. I tore the heavy screw-bar out of the tool chest; then I sprang into the empty place. I dared not shut off the steam at once, lest the train should close up on itself like a hand harmonica, and a fearful disaster be the result. Gradually I pushed in the throttle, and noticed that the train was running slower. I turned on the steam for the air-brakes, and heard directly the grinding and rumbling of the brakes. Then I shut off the steam—the train came to a stop close to the danger signal.

Again I heard the piercing yell from Häusler, who had crouched on the front of the locomotive. I saw him raise himself and leap from the engine; then he sprang up and ran shrieking away between the shining rails.

Not a human being on that train had any intimation of the danger which had threatened us. Out of the station came the Leipzig express headed towards us. With this train, which was closely packed with passengers as is usual at that hour of the evening, we should have come into collision at full speed in the station.

Our train received the signal to go ahead and I steamed slowly into the station. We arrived ten minutes ahead of time. The inspector hurried up at once with the guard and demanded an explanation; they were amazed to find me alone, and I was so overcome by all that I had gone through in those last few moments that I could with difficulty give them the desired information. Frau Häusler was naturally surprised when she did not see her husband, and I could not keep back the sad news that he had gone insane.

I was myself so broken down mentally that I remained off duty for several days by direction of the Company's physician.

When I reported for duty once more, I learnt that Häusler, who was stark mad, had been captured in the station that same night, and the following morning had been taken to a lunatic asylum. The cause of this outbreak of insanity in him was the loss of his entire savings. He had intrusted them to a small banker, and the latter had absconded with all his deposits.

Oscar Klauzman.

Owing to the Christmas Holidays, this number of *Short Stories* goes to press before the result of Jumble Story No. 23 is known. The names of the winners will appear next week.

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An Ingenious Swindle.

THE diamond merchant from Kimberley—his name was Colomb—was tossing the third officer for drinks in the smoking-room of the *Hun*, which vessel, her bow pointed for Madeira, seemed inclined to make a record run. The latter lost. "Just my luck," he exclaimed, as he signed the wine card. Graham, the lawyer, always loquacious, promptly took him up. "Luck," he said scornfully, "luck, there is no such thing. It is an effete superstition, and should go the way of witches, spirits, evil eyes and kindred nonsense which civilised people no longer believe in."

Colomb, sipping his whisky, looked at him over the rim of the glass. "I don't agree with you," he said slowly as he set it down. "I believe in luck; it's a possession some people have and some haven't. My luck has been good through life, without it I should never have pulled through some tough places I've been in. I've only made one big mistake," he continued after a pause, his face lighting up as some reminiscence came into his mind, and that by a most wonderful piece of luck—for one can call it nothing else—was, as it turned out, the most fortunate thing I could have done."

"Let's hear the story," said someone.

"Well, I don't mind trying. I'm not a professional story-teller you know, gentlemen. I don't think I've ever told one in the smoking-room yet. It's a little adventure I had last year, and it occurred on board a Union boat."

The third officer said he was very sorry he couldn't stop to hear the story, but his watch began at twelve and he wanted a couple of hours' sleep, so he finished his whisky and left. The rest of us made ourselves as comfortable as possible, and prepared to listen with some curiosity, for Colomb did not often expand like this. He was a man of middle age, though his hair and moustache were yet jet black. From a boy he had been in the diamond trade, and was accounted one of the best judges of stones living, and wonderfully successful in all his dealings.

He now leaned back in his seat, put his hands in his trousers pockets and, apparently addressing the wall opposite him, began:

"I was in Johannesburg when last autumn I received a hint that a certain merchant in Durban was rather hard up and would most likely sell a fine parcel of diamonds he possessed and which he had bought with the intention of keeping. I had never been in Durban before, for, as you all know, there's no diamond trading there, but from what I heard I judged it would be worth a visit, so off I went next day. The railway was not open then beyond Charlestown, so I had to endure the coach, which brought back to my mind reminiscences of when Kimberley was without a railway. I reached Durban and saw my man, and after a long palaver we did a deal. I took his diamonds and paid him £6,000 for them. They were a very fine parcel, De Beers stones, and I got them pretty cheap. Then I went straight to the Universal, which is my bank, though never having been at Durham I had never done business with that branch before. I give them to the manager myself to keep till I went away, and saw them locked up in the strong room.

"'When will you call for them?' said he as we went back to his private room.

"'Why,' said I, 'I sail for Cape Town in the *Grecian*. She will leave, I believe, on Thursday morning. The *Gallio* is in too, rather queer two of the G's being together, isn't it?'

"'Yes,' he replied; 'I believe the *Gallio* sails to-morrow morning at day-break. You call for the diamonds yourself, of course?'

"I said 'yes,' and went off to book my passage in the *Grecian*. I had one old Kimberley friend settled in Durban with whom I was going to spend the evening, but he was unable to put me up, so to avoid trouble I made arrangements to go straight on board the *Grecian*, and took my portmanteau down to the harbour. She had arrived from Delagoa Bay, and was, of course, almost empty. I chose a deck cabin on the port side, unpacked my bag, and made things comfortable, then, telling my cabin steward I should not be back till late, went on shore again. The *Gallio* lay berthed next us, for she was sailing for Delagoa Bay next morning. I knew her captain slightly, and thought of calling, but my cab was waiting, so I didn't, but drove back to the town. It was rather early to go to my friend's and I stood at the corner of West Street, hesitating what to do, when I recognised that old rascal Speckels coming along the pavement arm in arm with another man. Speckles was a Kimberley man with a shady reputation. He had already undergone one imprisonment for T.D.B., and was strongly suspected of still following that dangerous but highly remunerative calling.

"'Hullo,' said I, and he stopped.

"'Ach, Meester Colomb. I hope I see you well.'

"'Why, what brings you here?' I inquired.

"'I am taking one holiday from beesness.'

"'And who's your friend?' I went on, looking at the other man, and noting that he wore dark spectacles and had a black beard. I had really no curiosity about either of the men, and merely spoke because I had nothing to do. The man in dark spectacles bowed to me but said nothing. Speckels said:

"'Mine friend, he is just from Hamburg last week, and knows no Eenglish.'

"'Good heavens,' said I, 'a German and knows no English! Your friend is a remarkable man.' I would have gone on chaffing the two men, but they took off their hats again and moved on. Presently I took a rickshaw to my friend's house, and in the course of the evening mentioned having seen Speckels.

"'That fellow is a rascal,' said he, for he knew him in his Kimberley days, 'but very cute. Too clever for the police to catch. He's up to no good here. What was his companion like?'

"'A dark man,' I said, 'of about my own height, but he wore blue spectacles, so I couldn't make much of him?'

"We played cards after dinner and I stopped late. It was after midnight when I reached the wharf again. I was most desperately sleepy, having passed the previous night in the train. I fell asleep in my rickshaw going down and was only half awake when I scrambled on board. However, I knew where my cabin was and

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entered. Lights were out in the cabins, the ship being in port. I pulled off my coat, collar and shoes, and felt for my pyjamas which I had laid out on the upper bunk. They were not there, the steward must have moved them. I felt on the lower bunk with the same result. I was too sleepy to light the candle or even to strike a match, but scrambled into the upper berth, pulled the sheet round me, and went sound off to sleep.

"I am a heavy sleeper, and it was bright daylight when I awoke. I lay a few seconds in the drowsy half unconscious state in which we always feel when waking from a sound slumber. Then the noise of engines sounded in my ears and I noticed that the cabin oscillated.

"I sat up, yes, the ship was undoubtedly moving. What did it mean? I sprang out of my bunk and ran outside. We were at sea, swiftly moving along, and no land in sight! Dazed and speechless I stared round me when a steward suddenly appeared going along the deck.

"'Where am I?' I said helplessly to him. He stared, as well he might.

"'Who are you, sir? I never saw you before.'

"'Isn't this the *Grecian?*'

"'Lord no, sir. This is the *Gallio*, bound for Delagoa Bay.'

"I laid hold of the railing and cursed myself till I felt better. I was on the wrong ship. I had climbed the wrong companion ladder, entered the cabin corresponding to my own and gone to sleep in it. All my luggage was on board the *Grecian*, which would have sailed before I could get back to Durban. Fortunately the diamonds were safe in the Durban bank. The first breakfast gong sounded as I stood on the deck turning the matter over in my mind. In a very bad temper I went back to the cabin and dressed. Coming out again the humour of the thing struck me, and I could not help smiling, when a voice sounded in the cabin I was just passing. It was Speckels. Glad of someone to speak to, and curious to learn what he was doing on this ship, I pulled the curtain in front of the cabin door away with a jerk and looked in. Speckels and his friend of the previous day were just dressed, and looked up at the sound of the curtain rings running back. I was still smiling as I looked at them, but my smile faded at their extraordinary behaviour at sight of me. Speckels shrieked: '*Mein Gott*,' and fell back against the bunks with a shock which made the woodwork creak. His face turned livid, and he shook as though he had the palsy, while his eyes seemed starting out of his head. The other man turned white, uttered a bitter execration, and saying in good English: 'The game's up,' sat down.

"Now I was utterly astonished at the fright my presence caused them, but I saw it would not do to appear ignorant.

"'The game is up,' I said gravely, wondering to myself what the game was. 'You didn't expect to see me here?' I went on. This was a safe thing to say, for their utter surprise at sight of me would have been visible to a blind man.

"'Ach! dear Meester Colomb,' said Speckels, going down on his knees before me. 'You veel not too hard on me? I have one wife and four leetle children. You will take them back and say nothing and I will make it worth your while. You are one gentleman and will be merciful?'

"'Take them back,' I said sternly—take what back I wondered—'you don't know what you are asking.'

"At this point the other man rose to his feet. His whole appearance and especially his eyes seemed familiar to me, but I could not remember where I had seen him. 'The game's up, Speckels,' he repeated, 'what's the good of whining? Give up the diamonds.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'give up the diamonds at once.'

"It may have been very stupid of me, but even now I did not guess the truth, and when Speckels produced a familiar looking case, it was all I could do to prevent crying out. For they were *my* diamonds, the diamonds I had bought the previous day and handed over to the bank manager. What did it mean? Had they burgled the strong room or was the manager in the plot? Both superstitions were equally impossible. My fingers promptly closed on the diamonds and I quickly ran my eye over them to see that none were missing. They were all there, and I pocketed the parcel and made for the door. 'You two men,' I said, 'had better stop here for the present,' and I left the unlucky thieves sunk in despair.

"Still utterly at sea—in a double sense—as to what had happened and how they had gained possession of the diamonds, I re-entered my own cabin. Then as I stood mechanically looking at myself in the glass over the washstand the explanation flashed upon me. The face and appearance of Speckel's accomplice had been vaguely familiar to me. Those eyes which I had seen somewhere before were now looking at me from the looking-glass. There were my own eyes. That was the explanation, the man's beard was as false as himself and without it he bore a wonderful likeness to me. He had impersonated me in the most barefaced way, and walked off with the diamonds, but my unexpected appearance that morning had convinced them that I had discovered the plot and followed to regain possession of my property. Hence their horror and despair at sight of me.

"Well, I've nearly finished. I had the two swindlers arrested, and my double confessed. He had bought a ready-made flannel suit like mine, made up like me—he had been an actor once—and gone to the bank just on closing time. He said he was going to sleep on board and would take the diamonds then and give them in charge of the purser. The manager had only seen me once, he suspected nothing, and handed them over. It was the boldest swindle I've ever heard of, and but for my mistaking the ships would have been successful."

"Yes," said someone, "but wouldn't the bank have been responsible?"

"They would, but I should have had a lot of trouble to get the money. They would have said I ought to keep my double under lock and key. It would have meant a quarrel with some of the directors who were friends—and useful friends—of mine. And that's not all. The diamonds were of a peculiar shape, and I had a special order for such. As a matter of fact I sold them in a fortnight at a large profit. It was this knowledge that took me down to Durban."

"But," said another listener, "did you find out how the two men knew you were buying these diamonds?"

"No, I didn't, but I fancy they had been watching me for a long time and got wind somehow of what I was after. Well, the two men are safely looked after now, and my double won't impersonate me again in a hurry. Yes, gentlemen, I believe in luck. And now, who's for a rubber?"

CHARLES D. LESLIE.

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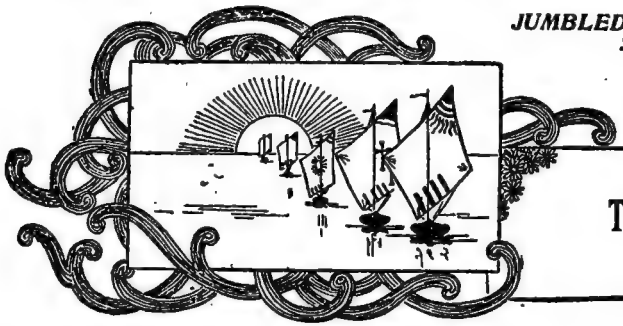
JUMBLED STORY No. 26.]
See Page 7.



THE FORCES ON AYOEII.

The maid knocked at the door.
The girl did not answer.
Alone in her room, she waited feverishly and went suddenly to the door.
Then she threw herself on the cushions again, turned up the lights, and crossing to the writing stage."
He turned on her fiercely.
Cicely put out a soft hand, and stroked her pile of soft cushions.
"I have told you why I do it. It is impossible for jokes in the future. I am going to enter St. Anne's convent. I wrote to Sister Catherine, my aunt, as fair as an angel, as tender as a dove, but as nearly as bad as the tragic love scenes on the hideous devilry beneath it all."
With a gesture of impatience, he turned round, Good Heavens, Cicely, why do you do it? At least remember that you have left me in—the other place."
"Don't scream so, Will," the girl interrupted. she came again to her lonely home. She stood for me to marry, so I may as well treat the matter a moment in the hall, and it seemed that the into a troubled sleep.
"There you go again, making a joke of it all. "Poor old Will," she said gently.
"Don't. You'll drive me mad. Cicely you are stubborn as a——"
"I cannot. Believe me, I cannot."
Banish the thought, weak woman!
"You can. You know you can. But you won't."
"You are making me dreadfully tired. It is convent? Heaven?"
"You will not, then, Cicely? Remember it is lightly as seriously. I won't be able to make many for the last time, and you say you will not?"
"Then why do you do it, Cicely? Can't you see I have a right to know that."
Man-like, he did not notice the break in the girl's lover's.
He jerked his hand roughly away.
"What are you going to gain by entering this house.
"Well, go to Heaven," he cried, almost shaking up.
He strode up and down the room, kicking his fist at her. "Go. And may it cheer you to prepare your reward."
The door slammed behind him. His steps could throughout the long watches of the night until the breeze played on her heated face, and refreshed her shadow of a man awaited her, with arms outstretched. She is expecting me shortly."
Presently, when her sobs had calmed a little, she held tightly round her neck.
She sat quite still for a moment. The lights in early post should come. Towards morning she fell savagely at the furniture.
Cicely sprang up, her heart throbbing.
She went out herself to post this letter. A cool freak? I don't understand it. There is some slight frame, until it seemed that her delicate body turned them down.
In answer, Cicely wrote this:
"My letters, quick, girl."
The man telegraphed in reply: "Whatever you come at once and comfort you and we shall be very happy. I was a brute to treat you as I did."
A man, flustered, angry, tearing a bunch of violets to pieces, standing before her.
The violets went into the fire, and were burnt He did not see them.
She tore one open eagerly. It was very short, and wept tears of bitter sorrow. Sobs racked her hall door closed, and the girl was alone in the voice. Her great, pleading eyes were fixed on his. Little children ran forward, and clasped her knees, the room seemed to blind her. She rose, and and ran: "Write and tell me everything, I will be heard running down the stairs. Then the that you are ruining both our lives by this girlish do is right. My brave heroine, may the angels and told her that I had finally determined to come. a little. A curious thought occurred to her when with faces upturned to be kissed. Tiny soft arms could not withstand the strain.
So Cicely entered St. Anne's convent.
A pale-faced, slender girl, lying wearily back on a table, wrote this letter:
I had intended that you should leave me for ever as you under restraint. "A little queer in her head," they said. There is some hideous devilry beneath it all, as you say. I have fought against the horrible craving that assails me. Then you came, and I felt that with you I should conquer. Catherine, as you know, entered St. Anne's convent. If you think it would be better, I will lay bare my soul should descend to innocent lives? Now you know everything. That was not the reason. She was an inebriate, and died more worthy to love. And that is why I tried to send you this life, and entering St. Anne's convent for your sake. When I was born the curse descended on me. All my life might have forgotten me, and perhaps found someone else think ill of me, Will, for I love you from the bottom of my soul. Think of me rather as a martyr, who is going out of drinking. My mother had a loathing for intoxicants. The grandmother, as you know, spent the latter part of her life Do you blame me?
First I must tell you a little family history. My mere sight of wine on the table made her faint. Her sister, Then another thought came to me. What if my curse have done, with bitter thoughts in your heart, and then you away so lightly. But I cannot bear that you should always to you, and tell you why I am doing this thing.

CICELY.

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The Queen Against Owen

BY

Allen Upward

Author of "Secrets of the Courts of Europe," "The Prince of Balkistan," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Eleanor Margaret Owen is charged with the murder of her benefactress, Ann Lewis. Charles Prescott, who has known Eleanor since a child, holds the brief for the prosecution. His friend, George Tressamer, is in love with Eleanor, and holds the brief for her defence. The prosecution is vigorously pressed by Mr. Lewis, deceased's nephew.

CHAPTER IV.

The Assizes.

On a certain day in the month of July our lady the Queen, probably clad in ermine, and wearing on her head that gorgeous specimen of the jeweller's art which, when not in use, may be viewed at the Tower of London for the absurdly moderate sum of sixpence—our lady the Queen, I say, was reminded by her faithful Chancellor that various prisoners were awaiting trial in different parts of England and Wales, and among other places in Mynyddshire.

Whereupon her Majesty, with that constant attention to the welfare of her people which befits a sovereign, at once sat down and wrote, or possibly only signed, a stately document, requiring and empowering Sir Daniel Buller, Knight, one of the judges of her High Court; Sir John Wiseman, Knight, another of the aforesaid judges; Walter Reynold Davies, Esquire, one of her counsel learned in the law; Joseph Robert Pollington, Esquire, another of her counsel learned in the law; and Henry Jones, Esquire, yet a further specimen of her counsel learned in the law, to proceed to Mynyddshire, and there and then open the gaols and try such prisoners as were inside them.

In a similar and not less elaborate document she thoughtfully went on to provide for their hearing, and deciding at the same time any disputes over civil matters which might possibly have arisen among the population of that remote locality since it was last honoured by the presence of such bright visitants. This considerate act on her Majesty's part was, of course, intended to save her emissaries a second journey. Even a monarch in the administration of justice need not be above killing two birds with one stone.

In proceeding to Mynyddshire, however, a very invidious distinction was drawn between the gentlemen mentioned in the Royal Commission. The two first named because they were knights and judges, went down in state, were met at the station by the high sheriff of the county, and escorted by twenty javelin-men in gay attire to the comfortable lodgings prepared for them. The other three, for no other earthly reason than because their position was less exalted, had to get down as best they might, scramble into cabs with their portmanteaux, and put up at a common hotel. How true is the venerable saying: "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath!"

Having thus got an unfair start, the two judges preserved it to the end. They tried all the cases themselves, and their unfortunate colleagues had to be content with what crumbs they could pick up by appearing in court as common advocates.

The Southern Circuit has long been popular with judges. There is a great difference in circuits. The two Northern ones, with their vast populations and immense amount of work, are the bugbear of the puisne judge. The scenery of some of the other circuits is flat, and there is not much amusement going on in the assize towns. But the Southern combines several advantages. It is far from heavy as regards work, the country in many parts is beautiful, and the train service between the county towns is fairly good.

For these reasons the old stagers on the Bench are in the habit of trying to get the Southern Circuit. On the present occasion they had been successful. Sir Daniel Buller and Sir John Wiseman may not have been extremely popular with the Bar, but they were very popular with each other. They came down to Abertaff feeling in good form, Sir John to preside over the civil court, and Sir Daniel to mete out justice to the inmates of the county gaol.

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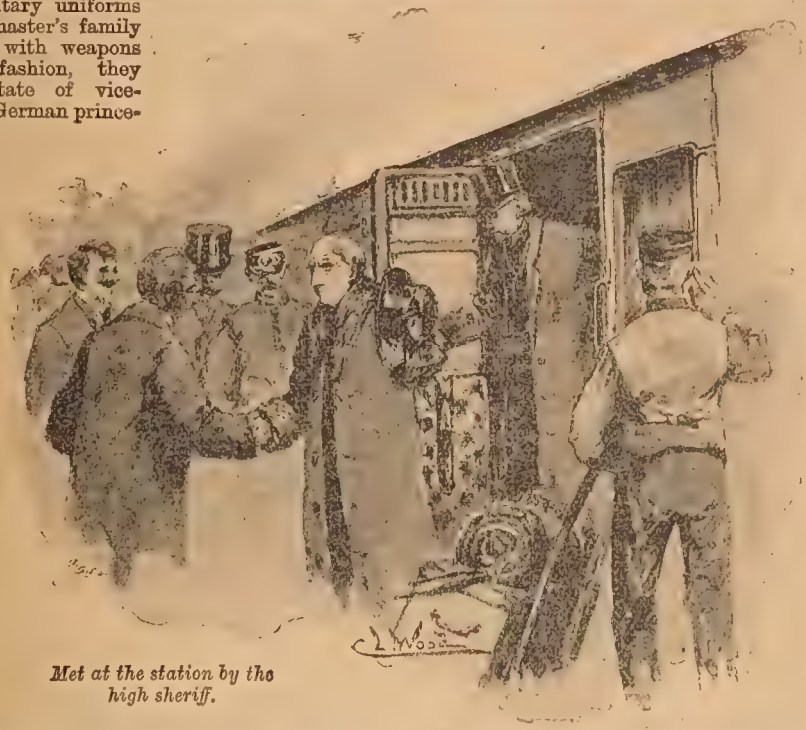
Not for many years had there been such excitement at assize time in the city. This excitement was due to two causes—the javelin-men and the society murder.

Javelin-men are dying out. In former times, when the office of sheriff was a mark of high social dignity, and before the new-fangled post of lord-lieutenant had usurped so much of its splendour, the shrievalty was an epoch in a county gentleman's career. It was considered almost worth being ruined for. A heavy mortgage was not grudged as a consequence of the lavish splendour with which the office was surrounded. In those days javelin-men were a reality. Clad in semi-military uniforms modelled on the master's family livery, and armed with weapons of an extinct fashion, they simulated the state of vice-royalty. Many a German princelet has enjoyed a less imposing body-guard than an English sheriff of the olden time.

But the railways have killed all that. Everyone now seeks distinction in the Metropolis. County society has become a by-word for the old-fashioned and humdrum, for bad living, bad manners, and bad taste. No one would dream of embarrassing his estate to secure a merely local renown. Hence the decay of the shrievalty. The modern high sheriff looks upon his obligatory office as a duty rather than an honour. He contents himself with the cheap services of the county police force for his retinue, and foregoes the expensive luxury of the javelin-men.



Met at the station by the high sheriff.

There are a few brilliant exceptions, however. The present sheriff of Mynyddshire was one. In the first place, he was master of what in the country is regarded as a colossal fortune. In the second place, he was the founder of his family. Money, therefore, was not an object to Mr. Simon Reynolds. Glory was. His office gave him just the chance he wanted, and he revived his mediæval honours with a willing hand.

Two-and-twenty men, counting the buglers, in gorgeous clothing of pink and yellow hue, accordingly gladdened the eyes of the Abertaffians as they paraded the streets and hung about the court-house. Each man of the rank and file carried a weapon the like of which has not often been looked upon. It resembled an axe with an exaggerated handle, only the back of the blade was prolonged into a formidable spike, while the handle extended beyond into a species of spear-point. Armed with these truly terrific weapons, Mr. Reynolds's faithful henchmen might well strike awe into the heart of the boldest boy in Abertaff. It was felt that they were the principal feature of the assize. The judges, by common consent, took a secondary place. Their robes were fine, no doubt, but their rather ill-fitting wigs formed a poor substitute for the gleaming steel of their rivals. The sober charms of justice cannot successfully compete with the dazzling splendour of arms.

As for the high sheriff himself, in his black velvet coat and frilled shirt-front, he was a very inferior attraction, while his chaplain was simply nowhere. He had his innings for one brief hour in the cathedral, where the judges were compelled to sit as meekly as so many jurymen under a lengthy summing-up; but after that one bright flash he sank into insignificance, and dragged out the remainder of the assize like the stick of a burnt-out rocket, unnoticed and unpitied by all.

Yet even the javelin-men were cast into the shade by the other great feature of the assize week. The crime of murder remains, after all is said and done, the one thing which most fascinates the public mind. And when to murder is added mystery, and when that mystery centres round the figure of a woman, and when that woman is young and beautiful, and in a social position which does away with the presence of squalid details or coarse motives, the public may be pardoned if they take the very fullest interest in her fate.

Indeed, the case of "The Queen against Owen," to give it its legal designation, was of more than local interest. The whole kingdom was excited about the position of the unhappy girl who lay in one of the cells of Abertaff Gaol. Every eye was watching eagerly for the unfolding of the tragic drama in which she was about to play the leading part.

All the great London dailies had their representatives down at the assize town to gather every detail of the forthcoming trial. Already the names of the counsel on both sides were being wired from one end of the country to the other, while in Mynyddshire and in the county town itself the excitement was so great that not the smallest attention was bestowed on any other case that was to come before the courts.

Even the judges themselves were infected with the excitement all around them. Mr. Justice Buller had read the depositions taken before the magistrates prior to leaving town. He had discussed little else with his brother Wiseman in the train. In all their experience, they agreed, they had never met with a case so clear upon the evidence, and yet so unsatisfactory to the mind.

In the presence of the sheriff, of course, the subject was dropped. Nor could it be resumed after dinner. Later on the judge of the criminal court sat down to make notes for his charge to the grand jury on the morrow. In this he dealt with several other serious cases that appeared in the calendar; but his gravest attention was devoted to the

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one that dwarfed all the others. This disposed of, he soon retired to rest.

The formal business of opening the assizes had been gone through on the afternoon the judges arrived. Sir Daniel Buller had been trumpeted off to the Court-house, and had sat with as much patience as he could command—and that was not a great deal—while a rather short-sighted and very fidgety clerk of arraigns, afflicted, moreover, with a severe cough, stumbled his way through the important documents already described. This proceeding was necessary in order to inform the loyal inhabitants of Mynyddshire, chiefly represented by errand-boys and loafers from the neighbouring taps, who their red-robed visitors really were, and what they had come to do.

The wholesale piano warehouseman.

On the following morning, therefore, the judges were free to proceed to work. They drove down to the court at half-past ten, accompanied by the swelling Reynolds and the visibly crestfallen chaplain, and escorted by the inevitable javelin-men, who swarmed about the place all day under the pretext of keeping order.

Sir John Wiseman went quietly off to his own court, and began at once at the unexciting work of trying whether the drippings from a wholesale piano warehouseman's spout had or had not damaged the hats in a neighbouring hat store, and, if so, whether the wholesale piano warehouseman was to blame, and if to blame, how much he ought to pay to the aggrieved hatter. Two of the gentlemen so unfairly deprived of seats upon the bench were engaged in this important case, and it occupied more than half the day.

But it had a rather poor audience. The crowd had rushed into the other court, where the gentlemen of the grand jury were answering to their names as often as the infirmities of the Clerk of Arraigns would allow them to discover whom he was calling. As soon as the necessary twenty-four were sworn, Mr. Justice Buller began his charge.

After a few civil remarks on the state of the county as regarded crime generally, and brief references to some of the other cases, he came to the all-absorbing topic. And now the reporters, who had sat listlessly under the infliction of previous remarks, woke to sudden life, and every word of his Lordship was caught and taken down as eagerly as if it had dropped from the lips of Shakespeare.

And this is what he said:

"And now I come to what is by far the gravest case in the calendar—one of the gravest cases that has ever come before me in my judicial experience. The prisoner, Eleanor Owen, is accused of the most serious crime, short of treason, known to our law. Gentlemen, it is not for you to try whether she is guilty. You have to hear the witnesses who will be sent in before you on behalf of the Crown, and if you are satisfied that they are speaking the truth, and the effect of their evidence on your minds is such as, if uncontradicted, to raise a fair presumption of the prisoner's guilt, then it is your duty to find a true bill against her. From the depositions taken by the magistrates, which have been put before me, I do not anticipate that you will have much hesitation in coming to your decision. The case is entirely one of what is called circumstantial evidence, as such cases most generally are, and must be from the nature of things. Doubtless there are difficulties in the case—many and grave difficulties—with which it will be the duty of this tribunal to deal when the prisoner comes, if she does come, before us.

"The fact that the prisoner is charged with the deliberate murder of her friend—I may almost say her benefactress—with whom she had been living on terms of intimacy for a considerable time, and for no motive that has yet been suggested except a low and mercenary one, is calculated to arouse a natural repulsion in the mind, and to indispose it to believe that the charge is well-founded. But, gentlemen, these things, as they come before you, are matters of evidence. If the witnesses you are about to hear satisfy you that there is a *primâ facie* case made out against Eleanor Owen, that there are grounds for suspicion which she ought fairly to be called upon to answer and explain away if she can, then it is your duty not to hesitate, but to bring in a true bill for murder. And I must tell you, gentlemen, that so far as my reading of the depositions has guided me, this is not a case in which the crime admits of being reduced to any lesser charge. There are none of the elements present which may, and often do, justify a jury in reducing the charge of murder to that of manslaughter. There is no question, so far as I have been able to discover, of sudden provocation, of accident, or anything of that sort. Whoever committed this crime must, if you believe the evidence, have done so knowingly, designedly, and with premeditation, and therefore your finding, if you find against the prisoner, must be one of wilful murder. Gentlemen, I leave you to your deliberations."

With these words his Lordship dismissed the grand jury; and the barristers, in their wigs and gowns, some of them with briefs and a good many with none, came streaming into the well of the court, filling up the seats specially reserved for them, and overflowing into those occupied by their colleagues of the "lower branch." It seems rather hard on the Bar that some mysterious rule of etiquette, which they themselves probably do not understand, should forbid them to enter the assize court till this particular stage in the proceedings. Or can it be that this rule had its origin in the wisdom of their remote predecessors, devising artful means to escape the infliction of a tedious charge without appearing disrespectful to the Bench?

A lull followed. The judge, accustomed to have the eyes of men upon him, calmly betook himself to letter-writing. The high-sheriff, not so accustomed, fidgeted in his seat, looked round and counted the javelin-men in court, wondered how long the grand jury would be, and remembered, let us hope with remorse, the time when he was a grand juryman himself and wasted the time of the county by unnecessary questions to the witnesses. The fact is that the grand jury is played out. Everything for which they originally existed is now done by somebody else. Every case that comes before them now has already been investigated once by the committing magistrates. Their duty is simply to accuse the prisoner, nothing more; and it would be quite sufficient if they would just read the depositions and sign the indictment. But man, brief man, placed on a grand jury, and shut into a room without the interference of a legal authority, delights to show himself off by vain and superfluous inquiry. And hence it was that more than half-an-hour elapsed before the foreman was seen returning into the court with a trumpery indictment for larceny.

The interval had been usefully employed by the Clerk of Arraigns in compiling a petty jury, something in this fashion:

The Clerk of Arraigns (taking up a ticket, rather larger than a visiting-card, from a heap before him): "John Henry Mullerall." (To his clerk, a humble person in plebeian attire, who is popularly believed to know a great deal more about the procedure than the judge and the whole court put together): "Did he answer?" (The clerk hasn't heard him.) "John—Henry" (very loudly) "Mull—oh, I

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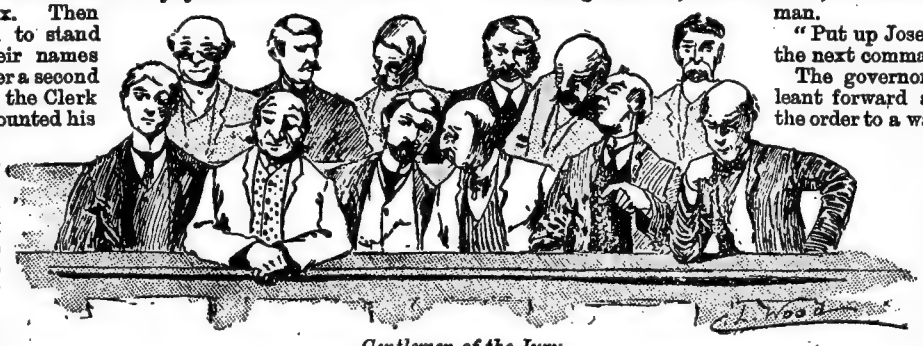
see, it's Muggle"—at the top of his voice: "Mugglewrath!" (testily) "Are you there?"

John Henry Mugglewrath (from a seat close by): "Here!"

The Clerk of Arraigns: "Oh! there you are. Why *don't* you gentlemen answer when you hear your names? Go into the box, please."

After about ten minutes of this sort of thing, twelve respectable inhabitants of Mynyddshire were collected in the jury-box. Then they all had to stand up while their names were read over a second time. Then the Clerk of Arraigns counted his tickets to make sure he had used up twelve, while his clerk counted the jurymen to see that they came to the same number. Then all was ready.



Gentlemen of the Jury.

Meanwhile, those gentlemen at the counsel's table who rejoiced in the possession of briefs made a great show of reading them, and making copious notes and interlineations with pencils of different colours—red, blue, and black. The public were greatly impressed as they watched these young giants of intellect at their work. There they were, mastering the most knotty points with ease, and constructing ingenious arguments, doubtless, as they went along. One gentleman excited the greatest interest, and quite threw his brethren into the shade, by pushing aside his brief and drawing towards him one of the loose sheets of foolscap which the kind forethought of the authorities had provided, and beginning to write on it in an abstracted manner. The onlookers deemed him to be wrestling with an opinion on some weighty question bristling with legal difficulties. They little guessed that he was addressing congratulations to a maiden aunt on the occasion of her approaching birthday.

But what really occupied the minds of the spectators, and kept their lips moving in subdued conversation, was the ending of the judge's charge.

"He has made up his mind that she is guilty," whispered Mr. Jenkins, the stationer from Queen Street, who had come to the court in the capacity of a common juryman, but had not been among the names first selected.

"And I don't wonder at it," replied his neighbour, a farmer from near Porthstone, who had been summoned in the same way. "A bad lot, I'll be bound. Wouldn't say nothing when her was before the magistrates. That looks bad, don't it?"

"Silence!" bawled a javelin-man just behind them, a rebuke which the worthy farmer at first thought was meant for himself. But the word was repeated instantly by other javelin-men, and then he perceived that the grand jury had at last achieved a stroke of work, and that the satellites of justice were merely drawing attention to that fact in their usual impressive manner.

The Clerk of Arraigns now received the document, and proceeded to expound its contents in this manner:

"Gentlemen of the grand jury, you find a——" here he stopped and turned it over to read what was on the back, a task which occupied several seconds; but he completed the sentence as if no break had occurred—"true bill against——" another pause—he was looking for the name concealed amid the mazes of technical phraseology. This time the foreman rashly attempted to help him out by murmuring, "Joseph Hall." The Clerk of Arraigns turned round and glared at him, then resumed his investigation, and finally brought out the name in a tone of triumph as of one who gloried in overcoming obstacles and was not to be baffled by any indictment in the power of man to draw: "Joseph Hall, for stealing a coat of the value of thirty shillings; also for receiving the same, knowing it to be stolen."

He then turned again and bestowed an impatient nod on the waiting foreman, who withdrew, a crushed and miserable man.

"Put up Joseph Hall," was the next command.

The governor of the gaol leant forward and repeated the order to a warder who had already heard it perfectly and dived below, apparently through the solid floor of the court. The next moment Mr. Hall appeared, with easy nonchalance, and leant forward in a graceful attitude on the bar of the dock, while the Clerk of Arraigns proceeded to acquaint him with the crime of which he was accused.

Exhibiting no surprise at this piece of information, which, considering he had been lying under the accusation for two months, was, perhaps, hardly to be wondered at, Mr. Hall in emphatic tones pronounced himself innocent.

"What?" said the Clerk of Arraigns, stretching anxiously forward.

Mr. Hall repeated his sentiments.

"What does he say?" exclaimed the Clerk of Arraigns, appealing to the court generally for assistance.

The response was a loud but confused roar of voices from the junior Bar, out of which the only clear sound that penetrated to the unfortunate man's brain was the word "guilty."

"He says he's guilty!" he remarked to his clerk, in what he intended for an aside, but which was perfectly audible over the whole building.

At this point the judge, becoming impatient, leant over and tapped the Clerk of Arraigns on the shoulder. He turned round.

"He pleads guilty, my Lord," he said, thinking that the judge wished for information.

"No he doesn't, Mr. Hughes. He said 'not guilty,'" answered the judge.

Mr. Hughes was nearly beside himself by this time. Leaning forward in the direction of the prisoner, he shouted fiercely:

"What *do* you say? Are you guilty or not?"

"No," came in tones loud enough for him to hear at last.

"Then *why* can't you speak distinctly? The names you are about to hear called are those of the jurors who are to try you, if you have any objection to them or any of them you shall make it as they come to the book to be sworn, or before they are sworn, and you shall be heard. John Henry Mugglewrath, stand up."

And, leaving this overwhelming communication to gradually make itself clear to the prisoner's mind, the Clerk of Arraigns went on swearing in the jury as hard as he could go, with the assistance of the judge's clerk (who recited the oath) and his own clerk (who handed the testament, as it is called, though really containing only the works of the four Evangelists). It need scarcely be observed that the jurors never came to the book at all. The book came to them.

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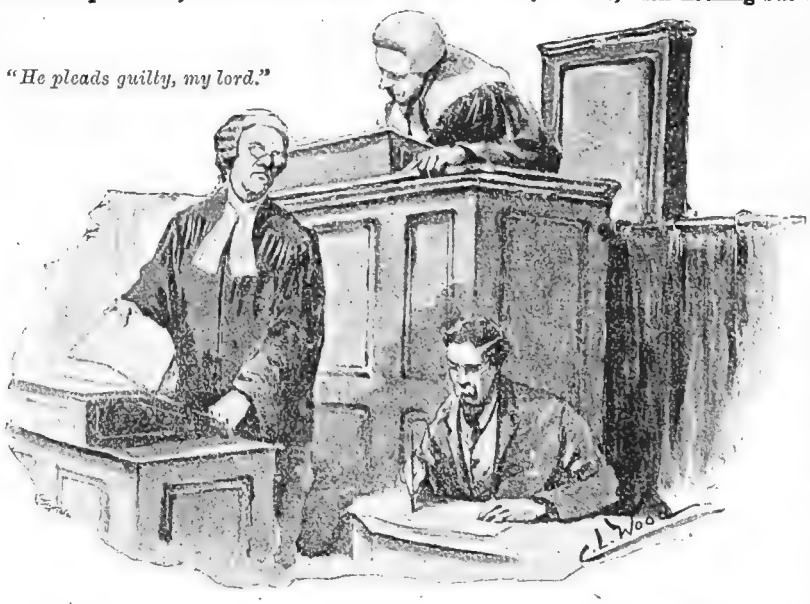
A rather flighty young counsel, who seemed to consider the whole thing somewhat in the light of a joke, or a species of amateur theatricals on a large scale, having presented the case for the prosecution, Mr. Hall was called upon for his defence.

It then came out that the poor man, than whom no more honest creature ever walked the earth, had been made the victim of a truly diabolical hoax. He was sitting reading the newspaper in a public-house, the "Three Hens"—he had not even been drinking, mind, simply reading the newspaper—when a perfect stranger, whom he had never seen before or since, but whom he should know anywhere, came in, with an overcoat (the one produced in court) over his arm.



"He pleads guilty, my lord."

The stranger, with a craft for which an innocent being like Mr. Hall was no match, began by offering refreshments. These consumed, he asked Mr. Hall to do him the favour of pawning his overcoat for him. Mr. Hall then very naturally put the question: Why didn't he pawn it himself?

The stranger replied that he was unfamiliar with pawnshops, that he doubted his ability to make a good bargain, and that he was willing to pay his new acquaintance a commission on the proceeds. This last offer Mr. Hall had magnanimously refused, but out of mere good nature he went forth to do the stranger's bidding. The pawnbroker, however, with a distrust in human nature which stamped him as having an evil mind, called in a passing policeman, and gave this victim of his own kindly disposition into custody.

The sequel was inevitable. The constable was led by the unsuspicious Hall to the bar of the "Three Hens," but the mysterious stranger had gone and left no trace. Poor, humble, with nothing but his good character to rely on, Mr. Hall now cast himself with confidence on the discernment of the gentlemen before him.

The gentlemen had made up their minds already. But they could not give their verdict till the judge had had his turn. Mr. Justice Buller set to and occupied exactly fourteen minutes in telling the jury that there was not much evidence of stealing, but there was strong evidence of the receiving. The jury then occupied exactly fourteen seconds in deciding that the prisoner was guilty of stealing.

It then transpired that this was not the first time Mr. Hall had been the victim of appearances. His trusting nature had led him on six previous occasions to incur the censure of the law. He was, therefore, now bidden to take up his abode where no such temptations could assail him for the next five years.

By this time several other bills had come in from the grand jury, and it had become apparent that the all-absorbing murder would not be tried that day. The audience gradually drifted off, and the remainder of the day's performance took place before a half-empty house.

(To be continued.)

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AN ANIMAL ELIXIR.

The Extraordinary Story of How an Old Man Became Young.

ONE August afternoon, in the year 1870, I met at the outskirts of Berunegui, in the San Blas mining regions, not far from the town of Legutiano, a company of villagers who were following the body of a child to the cemetery. The little corpse reclined upon a cushion surrounded by followers, and, as is customary in that country, was borne upon the head of an old woman. Moved by idle curiosity, I inquired whose child it was.

"No one knows, sir," replied a villager; "it was found, alive and naked, there in the glen some two years ago. It was taken to the house of Gussurrandi and continued, little by little, shrinking, shrinking, and falling away, until it became like a new-born infant, finally ceased to nurse, and died. Stranger still, its face is wrinkled like an old man's, and its fingers are burnt and stained like those of one in the habit of smoking a pipe."

These details aroused my curiosity, and I joined the party in order to obtain a view of the strange corpse. Before it was deposited in the grave, while the women wept and prayed, I examined it. The villager was right; the body certainly presented a most incomprehensible appearance. Imagine a newly-born child, the forehead and cheeks marked with hard, callous wrinkles, the half-opened eyes retaining an expression of marked intelligence, and the upper portion of the thumb and index-finger of each hand yellow and discoloured like those of an old smoker.

The child being buried, I returned with the party to Berunegui to pass the night with the Gussurrandi family, being well acquainted with them.

"What did that child die of?" I asked my hosts.

"Ah, Mr. Richard," replied the wife, "it must have been a case of witchcraft, for a stranger thing never happened. When we first found the child it ate bread, meat, and pottage; afterwards the four teeth it had fell out, it stopped eating, seemed to lose all knowledge of persons and things, and we were compelled to suckle it, and in the last days of its life, it lost even the power to do this. When first discovered it seemed a well-sized child, but it gradually shrunk to half its original size. The expression of its eyes was remarkably intelligent; it acted at times as if it wished to speak, seemed to understand perfectly all that was said, and appeared continually labouring under some mysterious and terrible agitation."

"And you have no idea as to where it came from?"

"Not the slightest. One day, on returning from work, we found it, quite naked, amidst a heap of old clothing. It aroused our pity, we took it in, and cared for it. Among the old clothing there was a bundle of papers and an old pipe."

"Where are these objects?"

"I have them all in a box," replied my host; "but as I cannot read, I have never examined them closely. One day I showed them to the priest, but he told me they were written in Bescayan, and he could not understand them."

"Bring them! Bring them!" I cried excitedly.

"I will bring them, but will you read them all, every bit, to us?"

"Yes, friend Gussurrandi, all, and will make all as plain as possible."

So, after supper, a lamp was lighted and placed at my side, and, after the men had filled and lighted their pipes, and all taken seats around me, I unrolled the bundle of papers given me by my host. It was composed of many leaves of different sizes, ages, and styles of writing. I arranged them in order, and, with ever-increasing astonishment and curiosity to myself as well as to my listeners, read the following:

The 20th of August, 1785, completed my eighty-fifth year, and I found myself in the kitchen of my beautiful home, seated at the table with Don Juan Manuel de Ursubil, a famed Empiric, a man of great ability and recondite knowledge, whom I had known intimately from youth. My children and grandchildren, after celebrating the anniversary of my birth, had retired to their homes. The Empiric, myself, and an old serving-woman who waited upon me, were alone in the house. It was one o'clock in the morning, we had smoked thirty-four pipes of tobacco and drunk five jars of cider, and, though at that time I was rugged as an oak tree and of an exceptional constitution, so much smoking and drinking caused my head to spin.

The Empiric was even worse than myself. For more

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than an hour he talked unceasingly of humours, clavicles, systems, plasters, and other things, of which I understood not a word. I listened intently.

"You do not answer me," he finally said.

"What can I answer?"

"You might say something, man. What are you thinking of?"

"That I am very old and shall not last much longer."

Juan Manuel struck the table with his fist, and with a long laugh, exclaimed: "'Not much longer'—what folly! Why, you can live as long as the fancy strikes you."

"Truly?"

"Surely. I have a secret of everlasting life; but I fear the Inquisition and the priests, if they learnt of it. I would be taken for a sorcerer, and it would go hard with me."

"Juan Manuel, are you telling me the truth?"

"The exact truth. Ah, if I could but find one who did not wish to die."

"You could easily find many."

"You are mistaken. Men are peculiar in their mode of reasoning; they fear death, but they fear more the operation they must undergo to escape death. They would rather die than suffer for a few days."

My brain reeled. This learned man expressed himself with such positive conviction that it already seemed to me that death no longer existed. There was an ineffable satisfaction in the thought.

We drank several more glasses. The old servant was sound asleep, the stocking she had been knitting had fallen from her hands, and the cat was playing with the yarn.

"Why do you not make a proof of your theory upon yourself?" I asked the Empiric.

"What nonsense! How could I operate upon myself when the performance demands all my care, observation, and strength?"

We again relapsed into silence. My eighty-five years weighed heavily upon me, a new life appealed to me too strongly to be resisted. I decided, and rising suddenly cried: "*I do not wish to die!* Dispose of me!"

"Done!" answered Juan Manuel, rubbing his hands with pleasure. "Eighty or eighty thousand years hence we will again drink cider in honour of the twentieth of August."

He rose staggering, seized my arm, and said: "Let us go."

"Where?"

"To my house. This very night all shall be accomplished."

"Let us go then." And in my shirt sleeves, just as I was, we set out, unsteadily, reeling, and stumbling, towards his house.

On reaching his room Juan Manuel lit a lamp, took off his hat and coat, opened a drawer of a table, from which he took an apparatus composed of wires, bandages, tubes, and bulbs with wooden keys, then rolled up his sleeves, pushed a bed from an adjoining alcove into the centre of the room, placed a large copper kettle beside it on the floor, and, turning to me, said smilingly: "Now place yourself full length on the bed, and remain perfectly quiet."

I extinguished my pipe and threw myself upon the bed, stretching myself out as much as possible. The Empiric then produced a lancet, and, after feeling my left arm, made a broad incision in one of the veins. I heard the splashing of the blood as it fell into the cauldron, while Juan Manuel busied himself preparing his strange apparatus.

This must have consumed a quarter of an hour, when I began to feel horribly weak from loss of blood. All effects of intoxication had disappeared. From time to time the Empiric felt my pulse, murmuring as he continued his work: "More—more yet!" I do not know how long a time elapsed, but I suddenly found that I could not move; I was consumed by thirst, but could not make an articulate sound; I could only lie there and listen to the monotonous dripping, dripping of the blood as it fell into the cauldron. My sense of vision, though, had remained remarkably clear and distinct.

The Empiric again felt my pulse. "Good!" he exclaimed; "a little more," and finally, "enough!" and he remained contemplating me for some time in a species of abstraction. Then he bound up the wound, and taking some small pieces of linen moistened in water, he introduced them into my mouth, pushing them into my throat, using for this purpose the wooden handle of a spoon. Then he closed my nostrils with a piece of dampened tow.

"So!" he said, when this was accomplished, "we are progressing finely. Now breathing almost imperceptibly, and with the heart barely fluttering, we shall come within a step of death, but that step we will not take."

My condition was now simply indescribable. I seemed to have no body, for only the head retained warmth and life. A terrible oppression weighed upon my breast, my ribs seemed crushed in, and I felt an intense agony in every respiration as I inhaled a little air through the damp cloths. My head seemed burning, and the slow pulsation of my heart reverberated in my ears like the blows of a hammer.

Juan Manuel, after contemplating me for some time, took a deep drink. "It is necessary," he said; "my nerves must be steady."

He then went out and returned in a short time, carrying in his arms one of his grandsons, a beautiful four-year-old child, who appeared wrapped in profound slumber. He laid the child down beside me and made the sign of the cross over it.

"My plan," he said, communing with himself, "must have occurred to many; but the actual problem is that the regenerating blood shall not come in contact with the air; that it shall pass warm, pure, full of life, and throbbing with power, from the heart of the child to the almost lifeless old man. The old man loses his blood; there it is in the cauldron, weakened and vitiated by the sins and pains of eighty-five years. The child is going to transmit his almost entirely; but it will not matter, for, after eight days, the little that will be left will have multiplied, and the child will be as robust as before. Blood is fire; a single drop serves for the base of a life. I know there are doctors in Salamanca and Alcala who laugh at me, for it is the privilege of men of science to laugh with impunity at others, whether they are right or wrong. But after my friend shall have lived for two thousand years, where, then, will be the doctors of Salamanca?"

He again placed his hand over my heart; it scarcely fluttered and the noise in my ears had died away.

"Now is the time," he exclaimed; "he will feel nothing now."

He then took the strange apparatus from the table and enveloped my neck with its bandages, doing likewise with the child, who still remained without moving at my side. Next, from another vessel he took a dark ointment, with which he smeared the wooden keys of

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his apparatus and also my neck, all but one side, where, by means of a cupping-glass, he had drawn the flesh into a roll. The bulbs were squeezed together, the tubes in which they terminated adhering firmly to my own and the child's neck. Among the wires constituting the apparatus were two long and strong ones which the Empiric, grasping with both hands, gave a sudden jerk, as if he wished to separate them; at the same instant, I felt a sharp pain in the side of my neck and the child gave a terrible start. Then a cloud passed before my eyes, but I could still hear Juan Manuel rubbing his hands with pleasure and murmuring to himself: "It beats, *it beats!*—after twenty years of thought and study—the air does not enter—the priests and doctors are vanquished!"

On opening my eyes on the following day, I found myself stretched upon that same bed. The Empiric was beside me. I endeavoured to speak, but could not; the Empiric placed his finger on his lip and shook his head.

"You now have within your veins," he said, "the revivifying blood of youth. You will begin life at the age of four years. What terrible heat! A hundred and eighteen pulsations! the new blood pours through your veins like a torrent in a millrace. This fever will last for fifteen days, during which time you must take nothing but milk. My little grandson is resting well; in six more days he will have recovered. Ah, my apparatus is a marvel."

At this juncture a knock came at the door, and my old servant, Maria Anton, entered.

"What has become of my master?" she asked.

"Here he is; a little indisposed because in accompanying me home he stumbled and——"

"That terrible cider!"

"No, Maria, it was owing to the darkness. Two of his ribs are displaced, but inside of fifteen days he will be all right."

Maria Anton, thus reassured, departed.

"Poor old woman," mused the Empiric; "how many of your granddaughters will have to wait upon your master!"

For many days the Empiric paid me hourly visits, feeling my pulse, giving me milk, and talking to himself. My condition was very peculiar. My whole body was burning with a feverish heat, and I experienced a general trembling, with light pains in the chest, back, and ribs on drawing a breath, but felt a sensation of restful satisfaction when the air was expelled *from* my lungs.

By degrees my strength returned, and at the end of twenty days, accompanied by Juan Manuel, I returned to my own house.

"I believe your life is now assured for another epoch," he said, as he approached my door; "but you must be careful, as it is, of course, exposed the same as before to disease and violent accidents. I have merely lengthened your days by renewing the vital element which sustains life; what you should do is to be silent and watchful."

Some time passed, and my health and strength became enviable, save for that strange, persistent pain in the breast accompanying each respiration. Yet I could never convince myself that Juan Manuel had succeeded in his undertaking, but looked upon the operation as a grave indiscretion, committed while we both were intoxicated, and I expected to die at the usual age of mankind.

Five years later my face was more ruddy, my pulse stronger, my appetite and strength doubled, and, strangest of all, the bald portion of my head was again covered with beautiful grey hair and the wrinkles on my hands had disappeared. Juan Manuel, then just turned seventy, was mad with exultation; he would spend whole hours smoking and contemplating me with all the affection and interest of an artist looking at his work.

"What puzzles me," I said, "is that constant pain in my breast."

"And me also," he replied; "I have been thinking of that for three years without being able to discover the cause. It seems to me that after five years my grandson's blood should have become accustomed to flowing through your veins."

After three more years, my face was still rosier, my health and strength greater; in fact, my wonderful vitality terrified my friends. On my hundredth birthday I entertained all the relatives who had assisted at the celebration of my eighty-fifth—that is, all save some eighteen, who had passed away.

The Empiric, meanwhile, had aged greatly, and his health was visibly failing from day to day, only in his eyes still gleamed the old expression of vivacity and satisfaction.

One morning, very early, he came to my house, and, shutting himself in my room, said to me:

"You are now convinced?"

"Yes, my friend, *entirely* convinced."

"Well, then, we must wait no longer. I feel very old, and, to tell the truth, the idea of dying does not suit me, holding, as I do, life in my hands. But there is a difficulty in the way. We cannot continue living here to repeat and exploit my discovery; they will persecute us relentlessly. It is, therefore, necessary for you to make a great sacrifice for me. Let us go to France."

"To France?"

"Yes. There we shall enjoy our marvellous conquest; there I shall initiate you into my secret. You will operate upon me, and a thousand years from now we shall be able to give an account of ourselves."

"I owe you this second life, and will obey you."

I collected some gold I had laid by, bought two good mules, and, under the pretence of paying a vow to the Virgin of Aratte, took the road to the frontier.

We established ourselves in Bordeaux, and Juan Manuel began to instruct me in his secret. My intelligence, far from weakening, seemed clearer than ever; and my eyes, which had been far-sighted, had become strong and regular. Still, sometimes I felt a vague pain on thinking I should never die. Juan Manuel was astounded; my hair was gradually turning black, and my appetite becoming daily more enormous; but his consternation was complete when I one day told him I had become enamoured of the daughter of our hostess, Mdlle. Busant, and was inclined to marry her. As all the world knows, the entire city was aroused when the news went out that I, an old man of a hundred and six years, was going to take a wife. They pursued me, caricatured me, besieged me—our house became a perfect Babel.

"Your madness may cost us dear," the Empiric said to me with great sadness. "Now that I am ready for you to operate upon me, you have doubled your age, and soon all France will be talking about you. I am profoundly disgusted with you, and feel like abandoning you and dying myself, if you do not listen to me. Will you hear me?" continued the old man, beginning to weep.

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"Yes," I replied, "I am all yours."

"Well, then, abandon this Mdlle. Busant, forget this insensate love, and let us flee from here."

"But whither?"

"To any of the American colonies; and as soon as we land, you will operate upon me."

I separated therefore from my aggrieved little lady as diplomatically as possible, leaving her a magnificent present, and, almost in secret, we set out for Vera Cruz in an English vessel. During the tedious passage we entertained ourselves by conversing amicably, always, though, upon the same theme.

"What I cannot explain," said the Empiric, "is your complete and entire regeneration. After my wonderful operation, it was natural that you should have retained your aged appearance, grey hair, baldness, etc., indefinitely, the new blood merely maintaining your actual state. But it has been exactly the reverse; you are younger, stronger, and more full of life each day."

"As for myself," I answered, "what annoys me is this complete revolution here in my breast."

"I have not forgotten that, either," said the Empiric; "night after night, I have revolved it in my brain until I felt as if I were going mad." And once again Juan Manuel resumed his discussion of his apparatus, plans, hopes, and glory.

One afternoon as I was enjoying a siesta he came to me with dilated eyes, pulled me from my bed, and dragged me on deck to a solitary spot, where, seizing me by the neck, he made a careful examination of the scar left by the famous operation. At its conclusion he fell into my arms completely overcome, saying as he wiped away a tear: "Well, we have done it."

"What?" I interrogated.

"*That cursed drink!* Horror, horror, and a thousand times horror! You are the most unfortunate of men, my poor friend!"

"What are you saying? What have you discovered in me?"

Seizing me by the hands he dragged me back to our cabin.

"At last," he exclaimed, "I have found the explanation of the pain of your abnormal respiration—of your astonishing regeneration. When, on that never-to-be-forgotten night, I injected the blood of my grandson into your veins, I was a little—a little——"

"Exhilarated, eh?"

"That's it, exhilarated. That unlucky cider! You scarcely lived, your veins were empty after the great bleeding. On performing the operation, I lanced the child in an artery, and—oh, *curse* of drunkenness!—in you I opened a vein. The action of your heart was so weak, *the rush of new blood reversed it.* Through your veins rushes arterial blood, and through your arteries venous blood flows. No wonder there were pains in your chest. Your heart and lungs act contrarily. Your circulation is reversed, and you live the reverse of all men. Your organisation is being reconstructed exactly contrary to what happens to all other men—while they journey towards old age, you travel towards infancy. You are not a hundred and six years old, you are only seventy-four, eleven years younger than I, because we must count backwards from the day of the operation. Oh, forgive me, forgive me!"

"But, man," I said, "what of all this? I feel well; what can happen to me?"

"Unhappy man, you will be seventy years old, then fifty, forty, and, after——"

"But can you not correct this?"

"*Impossible!* Your case is one that no doctor or scholar has foreseen, one no book refers to, one no man has imagined or believed possible. For you there is no scientific precedent or explanation; you are a living paradox, an absurd positive, and an impossible reality. It was a case of malpractice on my part. You will operate upon me without drinking, of course—after two days of clear water, you understand—and then we will see if, after observing, you can remedy the evil. But, ah me! it is impossible. We can do nothing but weep." And large tears flowed over the old man's wrinkled cheeks.

One night, a little before reaching Vera Cruz, our vessel foundered in a fearful tempest. The Empiric clasped the box containing his precious apparatus. I lashed myself to a spar, and for two hours we were the playthings of the furious waves.

"I can do no more," cried the poor old man.

"Courage!" I called to him, "do not die now when you are on the threshold of immortality. Courage! We shall soon reach the shore."

"Impossible!" he answered; "take it," and he pushed the box towards me.

"Hold out one hour longer," I cried, and at the same moment a mass of water buried us in an abyss. When I came to the surface, buoyed up by the spar, Juan Manuel de Ursubil and his box had disappeared for ever.

A short time afterwards a launch from Veru Cruz picked me up, together with the other survivors of the wreck.

In Vera Cruz I joined a caravan of muleteers and set out for the City of Mexico, where I purchased an estate and two servants with the gold I had preserved in a belt clasped round my waist. There, in reading and contemplation, I passed fifteen years. I never worked at anything. I said to myself: "Unlike other men, I do not need to make provision for old age, for, when I am a child, there will surely be some blind man whom I can serve as a guide. And when I become a mere infant, some good woman will be found who will suckle me at her breast." At my forty-fourth year—that is to say, the one hundred and twenty-first counting from my birth—I was strong and erect, had lost all wrinkles, my eyes were bright, and a full black beard covered my face.

My servants were wont to say their master dyed his hair, and the ladies of the quarter murmured that the Señor Bescayan seemed to grow younger daily. There was one ripe blonde of some thirty years whom I thought seriously of marrying, but always on reflection I saw the impossibility of it. "In a little time," I considered, "she will be of my age and I of hers, and eventually my children will be older than I. I cannot love, nor marry, *nor live;* my moral torment is insufferable. It is best to terminate it at once."

As the speediest means of ending my life, I set out in the capacity of a volunteer with the soldiers sent by the viceroy against the Indians. But though I always fought in the posts of greatest danger, the bullets and arrows of the enemy respected me. I could not achieve death.

After peace was made with the savages, I, with some others of my companions, remained in the forest devoting our time to hunting. Among those simple people my adventures, knowledge, and great experience soon earned for me the nick-name of "Yhokero Oytcho," which means "The Great Liar."

For twenty years I remained in these forests,

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accumulating during that time, almost without effort, a very large amount of money. But to me this great wealth possessed no value. There was only one thing which offered me any consolation, and which still linked me to my old life; this was the habit I had retained of smoking the old and grimy pipe of my Gussurrandi home.

Wearied at length by this savage life, I separated from my good companions of the forest and repaired to New York, with the intention of laying my case before the most learned doctors of the country, explaining as much as I could of Juan Manuel's apparatus and submitting, if necessary, to a new injection. I was a hundred and forty-one years old when I presented myself before the eminent physician, R. Clark Maxwell.

He, on hearing the object of my consultation, put on a strange face; examined my body, my papers, my recollections of so many years, felt the old scar on my neck, and had me make a drawing of the apparatus of the Empiric; then he shrugged his shoulders, elevated his eyebrows, pursed up his lips, stuck out his tongue, and concluded by telling me to "call again to-morrow."

I called the next day and submitted to a new examination by several other doctors whom Maxwell had called in. Then I placed myself under their care for twenty days, while they experimented upon me with various kinds of diet, bled me, and submitted the blood to analysis and countless proofs, and finally took me before a sort of medical congress, whose members, after a heated discussion, decided that I was insane, my papers recollections, and my entire history but the product of a diseased imagination, and also declared Dr. Clark Maxwell, who espoused my cause, of unsound mind. This conclusion was arrived at by means of the ballot-box.

On reaching my hotel, I found the doctor's bill. This seemed to be the only subject upon which they were unanimous; they valued their services at £5,000. After paying them religiously I found myself worse off than before the consultation, my condition weakened, my abnormal existence without remedy, and my purse considerably lightened.

I took passage again for Spain, convinced that the poor Empiric knew more than all the doctors, and determined to realise the dream of my life, to die in my own land, at my old farmhouse.

As soon as I landed, two police agents arrested me and conducted me to gaol. It seems that a travelling companion of mine, seemingly an honest man, and to whom I had loaned some money during the trip, informed the captain of the vessel that I was a notorious thief fleeing to Spain with the funds of a great American association. I protested and gave proofs before the tribunal of my innocence, but as I could produce no witnesses, and as they found me possessed of a large sum of money, justice closed her eyes, or rather opened them too much, for I was thrown into a cell, and the court began to pile up sealed documents bearing upon my case.

They would not listen to me, but sent out to all parts of the country for information concerning me; and meanwhile I remained in prison for a long—a very long—time.

At last it happened to occur to someone to order an inspection of the prisons. The gaoler, supposing me a madman or a very dangerous criminal, had placed double doors upon my cell, and served me through a hole in the lower panel. When the door was opened he fell back with a cry of alarm. He had imprisoned a man of thirty years, tall, ruddy, and with a full beard, and now found a youth of eighteen or twenty, with scarcely a hair on his face, clad in the loosely-fitting rags of an old suit of clothes. I was again taken before the tribunal, and learnt that I had been confined for eighteen years, and that every penny of my money had been expended by justice in ascertaining the truth.

The result of the investigation was that I was not myself; that the prisoner of the thousands had escaped, leaving me in his place. The gaoler was declared an accomplice of the substitution and imprisoned, leaving me at liberty, after vain endeavours to ascertain who I was.

Thus it was that on foot, almost begging alms, I returned to the place of my birth. I inquired, without telling who I was, for my sons; they showed me my grandsons, already married. After seeing my house and orchard, and all the places made dear by the remembrance of past pleasures, filled with a profound sadness, I fled as if ashamed. Had I told who I was, no one would have believed me; they would have imprisoned me or sent me to a mad-house, even my own descendants.

I returned to Madrid, and for eleven years was a servant, match-seller, news-boy, boot-black, and I do not know how many other things. During this time I continued writing my memoirs and smoking my old clay pipe. My intelligence remained, and still is, clear; but each day I write worse, and believe I will end by being unable to form a letter. In 1863 I was seven years old, or it might be a hundred and sixty-three. To-day I am six, have been reduced to less than half my total height, my second teeth have fallen out and been replaced by my first or infantile set, and my head is covered with beautiful auburn hair. My power of understanding is being annihilated, together with my strength and childish tendencies.

Walking, walking, and suffering greatly, I have returned to my native land. I say that I am an orphan and poor, and they give me alms at every house. Yet, even though a beggar, it is consoling to live beside the house where one was born. . . . . (Here the manuscript is very illegible, and further on, in letters scarcely legible, it says): It is impossible for me to hold the pen or write one letter beside another. I do not know what will become of me; I only beg that some day, when I am found and am unable to speak or eat, that I may be carried to my house of Gussurrandi, because I wish to die in it.

José Anton.

While I read the women had risen terrified, making signs of wonder and terror, and crossing themselves often. As I finished they exclaimed in a chorus: "Blessed St. Barbara! It is impossible to believe that! *Impossible!*"

Gussurrandi consulted me as to what he should do in the matter.

"Nothing," I said. "Quiet the women and forget all about it."

All the women dreamt that night that the Empiric Juan Manuel, completely intoxicated, had fastened his apparatus on their throats.

Osmund Warde.

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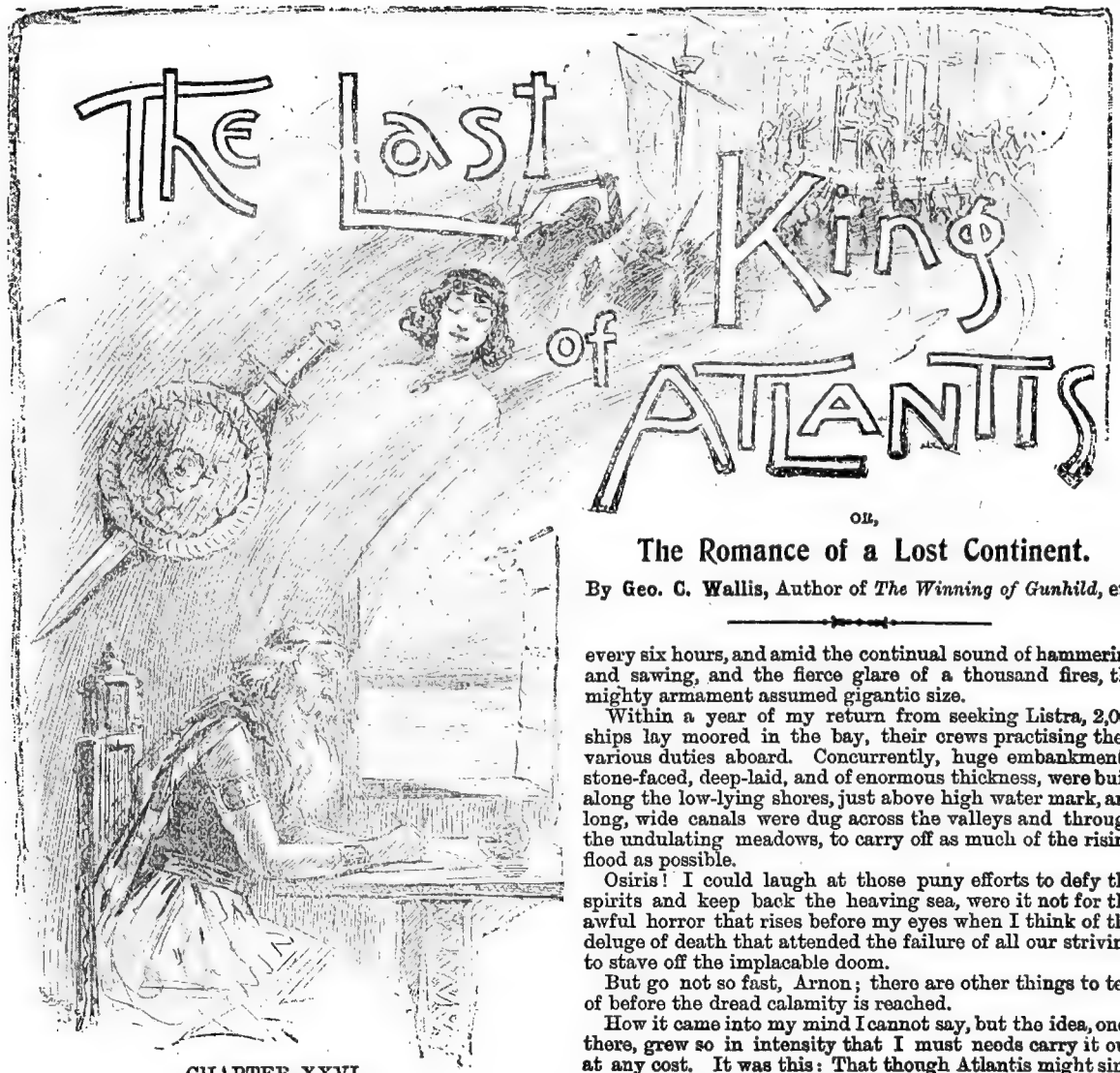

OR,

The Romance of a Lost Continent.

By Geo. C. Wallis, Author of *The Winning of Gunhild*, etc.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATE OF THE FLEET.

I was not back at Kronos long before I knew the extent of the sea's uprising. From north and south, and east and west, came word of the fearful damage. Harbours, villages, towns, harvest fields, and cane brakes, all round the coast, were now beneath the breakers that curled, a hundred thousand strong, upon the daily lessening shores. In places the earth cracked, with one part falling faster than the rest, and great convulsions shook the land, overturning buildings and trees, and reducing many towns to heaps of shapeless ruin.

The terror of the people grew greater week by week, and month by month, and but for the hope that I held out to them in the huge fleet I was preparing, all law would have been at an end, and riot, and plunder, and madness, would have reigned supreme.

As it was, I ruled a little longer. A king with a staunch army and a great fleet, but the king of a daily diminishing domain.

Day and night, without cessation, the building of ships went on, fresh bands of workers relieving the tired artisans every six hours, and amid the continual sound of hammering and sawing, and the fierce glare of a thousand fires, the mighty armament assumed gigantic size.

Within a year of my return from seeking Listra, 2,000 ships lay moored in the bay, their crews practising their various duties aboard. Concurrently, huge embankments, stone-faced, deep-laid, and of enormous thickness, were built along the low-lying shores, just above high water mark, and long, wide canals were dug across the valleys and through the undulating meadows, to carry off as much of the rising flood as possible.

Osiris! I could laugh at those puny efforts to defy the spirits and keep back the heaving sea, were it not for the awful horror that rises before my eyes when I think of the deluge of death that attended the failure of all our striving to stave off the implacable doom.

But go not so fast, Arnon; there are other things to tell of before the dread calamity is reached.

How it came into my mind I cannot say, but the idea, once there, grew so in intensity that I must needs carry it out at any cost. It was this: That though Atlantis might sink under the waters altogether, the highest parts would not be very far beneath the surface, and some lasting monument erected at the highest part would serve to denote its position, and keep up its memory among the nations.

And where, thought I, was a better place to build this monument than in Kronos, where the land had scarcely sunk at all? and what could I build better than a massive, cemented, stone tower, wide-spreading at its base, and tapering slowly as it rose to the sky?

My thought grew into action, and from a vacant space near the city uprose the giant tower, the mightiest work of man that ever cast a shadow on Atlantis. Round after round of the huge, curved stones was laid down, the foundation going deep into the earth, and each rising ring sloping slowly towards a summit that made men dizzy to imagine.

Storey by storey it grew, graceful in its shapely massiveness, the workers toiling at it with loving hands, raising the last memorial of their nation's place, and each stone in it was the height of a man, and the height of each stone in it was the height of a man and the length and thickness that of two.

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Temples, palaces, and great columnal arches, hitherto considered lofty, sank into insignificance as my splendid structure rose, and when the twentieth floor was reached, the top being yet wide enough to place my palace on, the very pyramids seemed dwarfed to little mounds compared with it.

Another year passed and still it grew, and even then the top would hold a cariole, circling round. And still the fleet increased, and still the sea gained on the land steadily, relentlessly, and little earthquakes shook the shores, driving the people inland till they crowded upon each other and food became scarce and disease broke out amongst them.

Some took ship without command, and left their country to seek a safer one, going where they pleased, and I knew not nor cared, and amongst these deserters, these traitors, went Nayrahn the soldier, he whom I first met before beleaguered Miropis.

In his secret heart I believe he had ever detested me, and when I gave Atris command of the army in preference to him he grumbled mightily, only ceasing when warned that 'tis a dangerous thing to rouse the ire of monarchs. So he went, taking one of my swiftest ships, the Lord Dison, who had been living at Saitè, going with him.

This news was told me by Valdo, who augured no good from the coming together of such birds of ill omen. However, I was not troubled, and said that it was well they had gone and that the land was best rid of such ingratiates as they.

'Twere needless to put down here the tale of the anxious days and restless nights of that time of dread suspense and accumulating woe, of the riots that were suppressed in blood, of the touching tributes of affection from my loyal subjects, of the devastating march of the devouring element that mocked at all our barriers and overflowed our rivers and canals, of the testing of the newly-built vessels and the loss of many by theft until I kept all ships within the Bay of Kronos, and guarded every hour; of the mutinies of the black slaves, and of the increasing scarcity of food.

It would only harrow my heart needlessly to tell of these in detail, and I would fain pass on to that awful night of doom when all our hopes were shattered, and the order that remained in Atlantis was turned at one swift stroke to frightful chaos, and the once magnificent city to a smoking, shapeless wreck.

Well I remember that eve, for we had but just returned, Briseis and I, from the peace of our rural retreat to the busy life of the city; from the calm quiet of unfettered freedom to the wearying constraint of royal pomp and the terrible anxiety of facing the ever-looming danger.

But the brief respite was well worth having, and in that fair estate, as yet untouched by the overcrowding press of population and not unsettled by the spreading panic, we could have lived for aye, deeming that sin was not, and that Nature never wore an evil face.

And now I deemed it time to put forth to sea with my mighty fleet, and search out some foreign land whereon to settle our unaccommodated thousands.

The night before the day for sailing came, and every ship anchored in the bay was manned, provisioned, and munitioned for the sea. At the first stroke on the great gong in the Temple of Life, at the first trumpet peal from the palace top, at the first red streak of dawn, the soldiers and the chosen emigrants were to move down to the bay, to embark and be placed in their proper quarters, and on board the *Ravager* I was to lead forth the mightiest armament that ever cut the waters of the Western sea.

So thought I, with comfortable pride, as, the day's work done, the preparations finished, and the people loudly jubilant, I retired to rest and sank to sleep at the side of my loving mate.

Such restful sleep was mine that night when I laid my weary head upon my pillow, and nothing was further from my thought than disaster and death. Till near midnight I slept undisturbed, when Briseis woke me, asking in a startled voice:

"What noise was that, husband?"

"What was't like?" I said drowsily. "A drunken brawler passing the palace, or a storm on the sea?"

"'Twas neither," answered Briseis. "But hark—there it is again; louder and nearer."

I listened, though carelessly, for my eyelids were heavy and my senses dulled, and hearing only a low, booming sound, as of thunder a long way off, I turned over and shut my eyes again, muttering that if the noise was aught amiss it had better stay till morning, when I would attend to it.

But Briseis shook me violently in her fear ere I was well settled for another snooze, and of my own accord I sat up, wakened and awed by a fearful crashing roar that made the solid walls of the palace tremble, and caused the very air to quiver. As its echo died away, and we sat there in the darkness, listening, with strained nerves and beating hearts and hands clasped together, there came a long, dull rumble, a heavy, rolling noise, as of the swift passing of ten thousand thousand carioles over a hollow space, followed by the rattle and crash of falling masonry, the angry surging of the sea, the piercing shriek of a fierce gale, cries of pain and terror from all directions, and a great glare of light that streamed through the casement ten times brighter than the noonday sun.

Then the darkness came again, silent and dense, for a moment, and thereafter filled with strange ear-splitting noises and fitful gleams of ruddy radiance, which latter vanished quickly as they came.

"'Tis an earth-shake, and I know not what besides," I said to Briseis, as she trembled in my grasp, "and lest we would be buried in the ruins of the palace, it were better that we stir from here. I will take you and the children into the deep rock cellars under the basement floor; there you and your maids will be safe till the throes are past."

"And what of yourself, Arnon?" she asked, as I took them through the tottering passages and down the shaking stairs, heedless of the panic-stricken rushings to and fro of the terrified servants and slaves. "What of yourself, whose life is dearer to me than my own?"

"I go to seek Valdo and Atris," I answered, "and to bear a man's part in the work that is before us. Where danger is, there Arnon will be found; but fear not, for your sweet sake I shall take heed how I go."

Deep in the subterranean caverns I left them, together with a throng of white-faced maids and ladies of the palace, and then, snatching up a light cloak, and girding "Sunderer" more securely to my belt, I quitted the rocking edifice, and set forth towards the fair garden where stood the house of Atris.

It was with difficulty that I got along at all, for the streets were cumbered with heaps of loosened masonry, with here and there a human form protruding from them, while ever and anon the ground shook like the deck of a stricken ship.

Stately houses, massive arches, graceful columns, gorgeous temples, airy pleasure-bridges, swayed and fell in the great earth-storm with deafening crash, a dun pall overhung the fire-flushed sky, and the mighty monumental tower that loomed so tall and vast above the scene of wreckage, quivered like an aspen in dusky air, and over all a grey, soft ash was falling, gently as the snow, thickening in the streets till the tread of the frightened thousands, surging hither and thither, was well-nigh inaudible, and collecting on the crumbling ruins and on all who scrambled through them.

I looked towards the harbour eastwards, and saw that the light proceeded from a round, conical hill, which belched forth flame and ash and streams of liquid fire that poured down its blackened sides with ruddy glow, crackling and sparkling as they came.

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The fierce eternal fires that burn below had forced their way through the sinking earth, and in the space of a few hours had thrown up the low mound, and was scattering death in all directions.

By Amun! how the lava rivers poured in glowing torrents down its sloping sides; how the heated liquid hissed and steamed where it met the sea; how thick and heavily fell the flakes of scorching ash, white and grey, darkening the air and choking the crowded streets.

But I hurried on after one swift glance had shown the horror that impended on the stately city, and using "Sunderer" to good effect to clear my way—for none stayed to question if I were king in that dread hour—held on through the dismally oppressive murk until I came to the house I sought. Therefrom emerged Atris as my foot was on the lowest step before the door, his hair dishevelled, his dress but half completed, and a wild look of anguish and despair upon his face. After him came Valdo, walking slow and sad, but calm even then, and carrying two swords.

"What hath befallen now, my captain?" I cried.

"Tell him, Valdo," said he, turning aside. "I was never ready of tongue, and now less ready than my custom."

"The ways of the Spirits are strange," said my Chief Minister. "In the great shock that hath laid low so much of the city, the rear of the house fell in, as thou wouldst see an it were clearer, and of those who have escaped are Atris and myself; of those who have perished are Izitla, his wife, and Phrena, their only child."

"Thy sorrow is great," I said, gently laying my hand upon my general's shoulder, and thinking of Viol and my first Didron, "but I have known the same loss—nay, felt the same grief here in this very garden—and I have lived to be happy even after that. There is work to do to-night, Atris, for all who can keep a clear head and a steady hand. Your King requires you."

"So be it," he said, taking one of the blades which Valdo carried; "now all that I loved is gone I can but die in my duty. Where go we, and what to do? To stay the pouring forth of yonder flaming fire?"

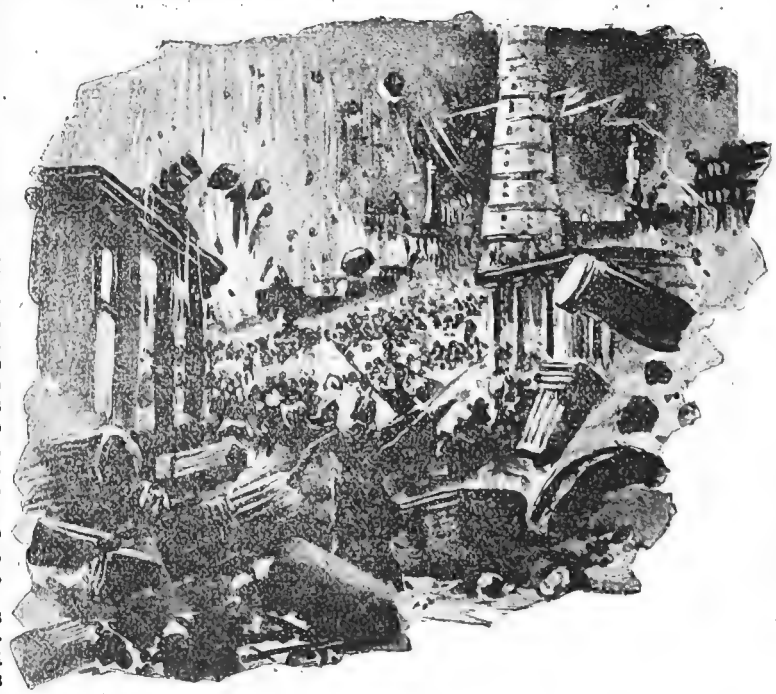
"Now you speak as a man, my Atris," I said, "though 'tis no human hand can stay that blazing beacon of disaster. 'Tis the ships we must essay to save, so that a way of escape may be left. We shall be buried fathoms deep under this deadly shower of dust unless we stir ourselves. Follow me, nor stand on any ceremony on the way!"

Forthwith we sallied out into the streets and turned our footsteps harbourwards. As we went I told them how I had secured the safety of my household, and that our first concern must be to find the *Ravager*, and keep guard at the harbour mouth lest any of the crews of the vessels should put away to sea regardless of their countrymen and women penned up in the death-bound city.

Even more difficult than it had been when I left the palace was it now to make progress, for the fast falling ash and warm dust, intermingled with nobs of flaming scoriæ, lay deep upon the ground, hiding many obstacles and pitfalls on the way.

The air was suffocatingly hot and oppressive, and, but for the flashing, ruddy gleams from the burning hill, we should inevitably have been lost in the dreadful gloom.

At last we reached the harbour-side, where the mighty fleet lay at anchor, tossing on the bosom of the agitated sea, whose very waves were crusted over with the powdery downfall. The decks and spars were grey-mantled with blinding, thickening shower, and some of the vessels had cut or broken their chains, and were standing out for the offing.



A dun pall overhung the fire-flushed sky.

"On board the *Ravager!*" I cried hoarsely, "and let us stop this mutiny at its beginning. Ho! Orlanis! bring her further in."

My Admiral obeyed, and as soon as her bow touched the quay, which was already crowded with the terror-stricken citizens, we three sprang aboard and headed the good ship for the harbour-mouth, the oars dipping fast and low into the muddy-looking sea; and ramming a couple of the miscreants as we went, we drew her up at the narrow entrance and there let down our anchors.

The other vessels, their crews having noted our action, held back on their cables, and the budding revolt was nipped ere it had time to develop. Yet it had been better had I let it take its course, for then some few of those strong new ships might have been saved from the general wreck that followed so swiftly the earth shiver and the bursting of the volcano from the ground.

I was speaking to Valdo, saying how hard a task would be ours to pull ashore in the boat and instil some method into the hurry and scurry of the witless populace—if it were wise to make the attempt—when the falling mist of dust and ash lightened, lifted, and then ceased altogether, blown far inland by a strong sea breeze that whistled through our rigging ominously, and yet with welcome freshness. The ships strained at their anchors, the sky cleared, brightening with the flush of a mellow dawn, and the fire-streaked smoke-cloud from the burning hill trailed out northward over the plain, leaving the city, with all its horror, open to the gathering light of day.

But what was that moaning sound vibrating on the rising gale? and what portended the death-like silence that succeeded, the sudden heaviness of the refreshed air, that

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heaped up banks of billowy clouds in the south? What meant that line of white on the surface of the sea, just below the skyline—a fringe of foam higher than the tallest of our masts, its curling top fretted by fierce forked lightnings, which showed as plainly as a silver pattern on a sombre shroud against the pitchy blackness that followed in its wake?

Full well we guessed its import, and foresaw the ravage it would work upon that crowded fleet. After one heart-thrill of terror and dismay—surely to be condoned—I regained my wonted temper, and clutching the lee rail, gave my orders to the crew:

"Cut cables and ship oars!" I cried. "Put her stern south and keep her there, and every man hold on for his life!"

Atris and Valdo, with a couple of brawny sailors, seized the helm and swung her half-round, the rowers pulled in their blades, and with bated breath each one waited for the coming of the great wave. For a space the dull, heavy silence lasted, the great wall of boiling water foaming nearer and nearer to the shore, and the cloud and the lightning-shattered darkness keeping closely in its rear.

Now it was hanging over us like a liquid mountain range, tipped with overwhelming snows, about to fall upon us, and I drew my breath deeply, looking shoreward and thinking of those I had left beneath the falling palace, and clutched the wooden stanchion upon which I leaned till the timber cracked in my iron grasp and the blood came to my face.

Then, with a blinding flash, a deafening roar, and a mighty shock, the surging wave was on us, its inshore edge catching our stern squarely, shivering our rudder and masts as though they were only dry branches of pine, and hurling the good ship forward and landward straight and swift as a stone from a sling.

Next moment the towering billow curled and fell with the splash and roar of a thousand cataracts, crushing the first line of the ships into a fearful wreck. But now we were beyond these, tearing onward with approachless speed, our keen iron ram shearing off the helms and oars of a dozen good vessels as we went.

Now we struck a large barque fairly amidships, and held our breath, clinging to our supports with frantic energy, as the sharp iron point tore its way through planks and crosstrees, splitting the vessel in twain, and the *Ravager* passed on. With a cry of horror from the doomed crew, which rang dismally in our ears, the stricken ship broke up, and plunged headlong downwards into the seething foam.

Soon the mighty wall of water rose below our stern again, bearing on its roaring, lightning-jagged crest the fragments of a hundred ships torn from their anchorage and sucked into the air by the force of the great wave's fury.

Just and only just in time, we were dashed against the stone-built quay, where the ram, driven like a wedge into an open space in the masonry, held us firmly as the stone itself.

Then it seemed that a deluge of boiling water passed over us, nearly taking our breath in its passing, that following it came an awful crowd of blistering steam, mingled with a rain of scorching dust, that the surging flood pouring into the burning hill, put out the fire for a moment, and next that a dense pall of smoke and ash overhung the city, blotting out the dull red glow of the rising sun.

And in the midst of the tempest of death, even through all the din of the wreckage and the hissing of the volcano, our ears caught the sound of the returning rushing waters, and, half-blinded, half-scorched as we were, the deluge passed over us once more, this time retreating seaward and quenching the fire for the last time.

And then, as though we had not had enough of horror, the great bay and its projecting promontories sank from beneath us with a sudden motion; the storm-lashed water, the black, fiery hill, and the whole of that mighty fleet vanishing from our sight in a gloomy, unfathomable gulf, our solitary vessel alone remaining, overhanging the abyss with a terrible unsteadiness. If the ram had broken or the

Into the yawning abyss.

stone-work given way, the *Ravager* and all on board must inevitably have been swallowed up with the others in that dread, black chasm.

Down, down, into the yawning abyss, the churned-up waters poured with reverberating roar; down, down, into the darkness, and just as we heard the stonework cracking and our timbers creaking with ominous sound, the flood rose up in the seething space where the fleet and the arms of the bay had been.

Through the driving murk our straining eyes caught sight of the dashing waves beneath, and then the staunch iron ram broke off short under the terrible stress, and the helmless, mastless, battered *Ravager* dropped like a stone into the raging sea!

(To be continued).

That charming serial story by Miss Winifred Graham, which ran through SHORT STORIES *a few months ago, entitled* "WHEN THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING," *may now be obtained from this office in book form for 3s. 6d. It makes an elegant gift book.*

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Faithful Unto Death.

"GOOD-BYE, Len."

"Take care of yourself, old fellow."

"Let's hear from you when you get home."

"Don't forget us."

"No danger of that, boys, and if any of you ever come to old Richmond, remember I live there."

The speaker is a young man, hardly thirty, and as he sits in the "buckboard," taking leave of the little crowd of men who have assembled to bid him good-bye, his handsome face and well-knit form are such as to attract attention at once.

After an absence of years, Len Hawley is going home. Out of the little frontier mining-town many another comrade has gone just as he is going—never to return. Many another who, day after day, had dreamt of going as he now is going, lay resting under the sod in the mountains around, whose crests are just beginning to be gilded with the rays of the early summer sun.

"Well, everything is on board, José, and you can drive round and pick up Mr. Dunsmier and his wife, and then turn yourself loose."

It is the stage agent who speaks, giving his last commands to the driver.

As the team of four half-broken broncos swings into the street, the young man's face burns at the words he has heard: and, in the embarrassment they cause him, he almost forgets to respond to the farewells shouted after him. He feels almost like jumping from the "buckboard" and rejoining the comrades he has left.

José stops his team at a house in front of which are already waiting a man of his own age, and a woman some years younger.

The man has the trunk placed to his satisfaction in the "buckboard," and then with his companion takes the hinder of the two seats.

With a crack of the whip, José turns his team into the road, and the weekly mail between Prescott and San Diego has begun its six hundred miles of travel over mountains and across deserts, to meet the steamers of the Pacific.

Two, at least, of the passengers—Len Hawley and Mrs. Dunsmier—are thinking how unfortunate is the coincidence that has thrown them together to make this long journey in company. As for Mr. Dunsmier, he merely thinks how unfortunate he is to be forced to make it at all.

In the past, when Mrs. Dunsmier was simply Mamie, the admitted belle of the little frontier settlement, she and Len Hawley had been lovers. That was before the man who now sat beside her had come into her life.

As for Dunsmier himself, Hawley had never liked him. There were very few who did. Selfish, overbearing, and unscrupulous, Dunsmier loved money as he loved nothing else on earth. To him it was a god, to be deified and worshipped above all else.

It was his boast that with money anything could be obtained, and when he had first begun to visit Mamie Manning, during her engagement to Hawley, his arrogant display of wealth, as well as his ill-concealed contempt of those of less means, had incensed Hawley so much that the quarrel that broke the engagement ensued, and Mamie had been pleased to charge it to his jealousy.

After that, it was easy for her to defend Dunsmier; and then the drifting apart had commenced, until she stood at the altar as Dunsmier's bride.

From that day Hawley had determined to leave the country. He had gone for the last time to look at the house which, during their engagement, Mamie and he had planned, and of which they had superintended the building.

As he went from room to room, he thought of the many times they had gone through them together, planning for the future, and dreaming dreams that were never to be realised.

For the last time he had locked the door, and, taking the key from it, had cast it from him. That had been months ago, and the house still stood vacant. The "buckboard" passed it in the early morning.

The mountains have been left behind, and the road is now in the valleys where the Spanish bayonet, the flat green leaves of the prickly pear, and the sage-brush have taken the place of the pines and the oaks.

The travellers have only stopped twice—to change horses and to eat the noonday lunch. The sun has passed the meridian, and is beginning to sink towards the west. The occasional cracking of José's whip and the muffled fall of the horses' feet in the heavy dust as

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they trot along, are the only sounds which break the stillness of the desert.

Heat, and thirst, and silence. Everything is parched and brown, and the yellow earth, where it is not covered by sand or dust, is baked and cracked waiting for the winter rains that are yet months away. Even the rocks, rough and jagged pieces of lava, are black as if burnt with the heat.

The three passengers sit in silence, longing for the next station, Camp Date Creek, more than ten miles away.

It will, at least, be a relief to reach it, if only to refill the canteens that have become so warm.

Suddenly José rises to his feet, and looks long and earnestly to the left, where half-a-dozen clouds of dust are in the air.

He drops to his seat and says simply, "*Indios.*"

Then he stops the horses, and, handing the reins to Hawley, jumps down. Drawing his knife, he steps to the back of the waggon, where the heavy trunk, placed there in the morning by Dunsmier, is lashed. As he is about to cut the ropes that tie it to the "buckboard," Dunsmier divines his intentions, and turns on him fiercely.

"No, no, you mustn't throw that off! There's bullion in it," he says, and, leaning over, he catches José's hand to prevent him from cutting the ropes that hold it.

"*Los Indios son Apachés!*" (The Indians are Apachés!) says José, his face growing paler as he notes how rapidly they are approaching while the "buckboard" delays.

"I can't help it; but you mustn't lose my trunk," said Dunsmier. "Can't you make him understand?—I can't speak Spanish," he asks, in a pleading voice, turning to Hawley.

It is the first time they have spoken since before the marriage, and, eyeing him contemptuously, Hawley interprets into Spanish what he has said; and José, thinking that he, too, is asking for the preservation of the trunk, leaves it, and, jumping into the waggon, takes the reins once more into his hands, and begins to ply the whip.

Hawley looks to see that his rifle is in order, and as he does so, he glances at the pale faces of the husband and wife behind him. As for himself, he is indifferent.

Dunsmier has begun to throw into the road the mail-bags. His wife looks at him as if to urge him to cut loose the trunk, but remains silent, as if afraid to ask it.

"He would sacrifice even her to save his gold," Hawley thinks bitterly.

The horses jump under the lash. They, too, have scented the danger, and seem to know that the race is one of life and death. The smooth, straight road stretches far ahead towards where it begins to climb the narrow pass through which it crosses the mountains.

It is at that point that the Indians are trying to intercept them. The cruel rawhide quirts, with which they are cutting their horses, seem to be always in the air, while the long, black hair of each streams out far behind.

They are slowly gaining.

Hawley raises his rifle, and fires at an Indian in the leading group.

A little puff of dust marks where the bullet strikes the ground to the left. No use to waste cartridges firing from the "buckboard." One can only wait until all hope of escape by flight is gone, and then fight until death comes. In fight is their only hope.

José has dropped from the seat to his knees, and leans far over the dashboard, that he may reach the farther with his whip. It whistles through the air as it falls on the flanks of the leaders and wheelers, leaving, wherever it falls, great welts that show plainly through the dust and foam that cover the horses! It cuts the thin, delicate nostrils of the wheelers, and raises ridges on the flanks of the leaders, while he shouts at them with fierce Spanish curses.

No wonder the horses grow wild with pain and fear, and dash madly on.

It is only a question of time before they are overtaken, unless something intervenes to save them. A broken trace, a cracked spring—and then a few shots, a rush by the Indians, and all would be over; the next passer-by would find their mutilated bodies lying in the road, amid the rifled trunks and mail-bags.

No one speaks.

They are almost at the point where the narrow road begins to climb the mountain pass.

Behind them, less than a mile away, come the Apachés, their horses flecked with foam.

As soon as the "buckboard" begins to ascend the mountains, it will be madness to drive as they have driven on the plains. To do so might throw them into the cañon hundreds of feet below, or break the vehicle against the boulders that line the roadside.

Already José is getting his horses in hand, as if to check their speed. Here the Indians have the advantage, and their sure-footed mustangs, unhampered by harness or waggon, will soon overtake the "buckboard."

There is one chance. Hawley, whose face is white and stern, says, facing Dunsmier and his wife:

"Dunsmier, from the top of the mountain it is hardly three miles into the next station, Camp Date Creek, and you and I, by getting out here, can keep back the Apachés until the waggon gets away. If we only hold them back for ten minutes it will be enough, for by that time the waggon can reach the top of the mountain, and then there will be no chance for the Indians to overtake it."

As he faces Dunsmier, for the first time for months he again looks into the eyes of the woman he has loved. How blue they appear in the white, pale face. They look pleadingly into his, and his heart is filled with pity for this woman who sits there in silence, with death so near.

Her eyes never leave his face, as if longing for him to speak, if only to pardon the past. All the old love comes back to him, and he feels as if he would give his life to take her again in his arms.

As he thinks it can never be, he puts the thought from him, and in its stead comes the pain that she has brought to him.

"Can't we escape without?" asks Dunsmier, his lips ashen with fear.

"No," answers Hawley, with bitter contempt, and a new hatred, born of the man's cowardice, in his heart; "it is the only chance for your wife, and we had better do it right ahead, where the climbing begins, and where we can get in among the boulders."

"Couldn't one do it? I should be willing to pay anything if——" Dunsmier ceased abruptly, as he caught the stern look in Hawley's eyes.

"You coward! Are you going to come with me or not?" asks Hawley, as he rises in his seat, rifle in hand.

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The horses, under the close rein that José is drawing, have slightly slackened their speed, for they are already in the pass.

"Yes—yes, of course I will go with you," comes from the white lips of Dunsmier.

Hawley reaches within his breast, and taking from it a purse, hands it to the woman.

"Mamie, this is all I have," he says simply; "see that my mother gets it. You know her address."

Mrs. Dunsmier stretches out her hand as if to prevent him from leaving the "Buckboard."

There are tears in her eyes as they meet his, and her voice trembles as she implores him not to throw his life away for her sake.

Almost before she can frame the words, he leaps from the waggon into the road.

In an instant he gathers himself together, and looks towards the "Buckboard."

Dunsmier is still seated in it, holding his wife as if to prevent her jumping from it. A wave of exultation seems to pass over Hawley as he sees this man, who was to have stood by him in facing the Apachés while his wife escaped, thus leave him to his fate.

For an instant the "Buckboard" almost stops, as if in response to some command from the woman; while Dunsmier, who seems beside himself with fear, has taken from the driver's hand the whip, and is striving to lash the horses into greater speed.

Hawley smiles to himself bitterly.

He can yet overtake the "Buckboard," or, easier still, he can hide among the boulders and brushwood that line the cañon from the Apaches, and after they have passed, easily make his escape. Better to let all end here.

She would escape, and would know that is was to him she owed her life.

He took off his hat, and threw it into the air, as a signal for José to drive on. He does not even look where it falls. He will never need it again, he thinks, as he crouches behind a boulder.

He raises his rifle, and fires at the foremost of the Indians who are galloping into the cañon.

In an instant they slip from their horses, and after firing a few shots at him, begin to climb the mountain side.

This is what he expected. They will climb the mountain side, and probably shoot him in the back from above; but before they can do so and remount their horses, the "Buckboard" and its passengers will be beyond pursuit.

He had feared that they would rush in on him, and after a few shots all would have been over with him, and his life would have been thrown away in vain. It was for this he had wanted Dunsmier to come with him. Two might do what one could not.

Enraged at the escape of the "Buckboard," through the delay he has caused them, the Indians fire volley after volley at him, until the cañon echoes so with reports that he cannot tell from which direction the shots are coming. He looks up towards the summit to see if any of his enemies are above him, and, as he does so, he catches a glimpse of the "Buckboard," with a woman's white face looking downwards. An instant and it is gone. Thank Heaven! He knows they are on the mesa now, and she is safe!

A straight level road is before the waggon, and at its end they can see, against the dark side of the mountains beyond, a cluster of adobe buildings, with a flag floating high in the air over the parade ground. The horses are again running as if mad, with the stingings of the whip that seems to be for ever falling.

The shots in the cañon die away in the distance.

A mile is passed, and then another.

Already the wild race had been noticed at the post, and, while they are still a couple of hundred yards away, the ringing notes of the bugle are sounding above the hard breathing of the horses and the rattling of the "Buckboard;" for, to the old soldier in command, such driving means that there is succour needed.

As the "Buckboard" passes the sentinel, a few words explain all; and, while the foam-covered team still stand trembling from their wild race, a troop of cavalry dashes by at a gallop to the rescue of the man who is facing such odds in the cañon.

The woman who has come in with the "Buckboard" watches the blue-coated men with staring eyes.

The husband approaches her, and places his hand upon her arm, as if to lead her into one of the houses, out of the sun.

She shakes his hand off, without looking at him.

The few women in the post gather round, and urge her to compose herself, but she does not seem to heed them. She can only stand and watch the cloud of dust which marks the progress of the cavalry.

They have crossed the mesa, and, as they disappear from the horizon beyond, she knows that if the Indians are still there, the cañon will soon be filled with the smoke and fire of the cavalry carbines.

An ambulance, in which is seated a hospital steward, approaches where she is standing, to receive orders from the commander of the post. When she hears that it, with its escort, is to follow the troop of cavalry, to bring back the dead and wounded, despite all that can be done, she takes a seat in it. When it returns, she is clasping to her breast the form of the man who had stayed behind in the cañon.

As the ambulance stops, a little crowd gathers round it, and looks into it curiously.

"He was shot to pieces, and dead before we got there," the sergeant explains.

H. ABBON.

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STRONG ENGLISH WORDS.

When a person says "I suffered excruciating pain," he expresses a fact in the strongest words afforded by the English language. The word "excruciating" comes from *crux*, a cross, and signifies an intensity of agony comparable only to that endured by one who undergoes the barbarous punishment of crucifixion. There are some diseases which, for a time, cause pain of this acute and formidable nature. To find a relief for it, when possible, is at once the impulse of humanity and the studious desire of science. Two brief examples may indicate what success is attending the effort to both comfort and cure cases of this kind.

"Nearly all my life," writes an intelligent woman, "I have borne the burden of what appeared to be incurable illness. I always felt heavy, weary, and tired. My appetite was poor, and after eating I had a *cruel pain* at my chest and between the shoulders. Frequently the pain was so intense that I was impelled to loose my clothing and walk about the room. My nerves were disordered and impressible, and I was, consequently, easily disquieted and upset. My sleep was habitually bad, and I seemed none the better for spending a night in bed. Eating but little my strength waned of necessity, and I came to be very weak. For a long time I got about feebly and with difficulty.

"In August, 1887, I had an attack of rheumatic gout, which gave me the most harrowing experience of my life. The complaint took its usual course and refused to yield to the ordinary treatment. Through the partial failure of the liver and kidneys dropsy set in, and my legs and feet became puffed and swollen. I suffered *excruciating pain* and was confined to my bed for *thirteen weeks*. Remedies of every description were tried, but to little purpose.

"My brother, visiting me one day, said he had been cured of an attack of dropsy by a medicine called Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle from Mr. Hewett, the chemist, in Seven Sisters Road, and after taking it felt a trifle easier. I continued taking it, and soon the pain and swelling abated. I could eat without pain or inconvenience, and by a few weeks' further use of the Syrup I was not only free from any local ailment, but felt better than I ever did in my life before. Since then I have enjoyed continuous good health, taking a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup occasionally for some transient indisposition. You are at liberty to publish my letter. (Signed) (Mrs.) Elizabeth Rogers, 42, Plevna Road, South Tottenham, London, September 13th, 1895."

"In January, 1892," writes another, "I had an attack of influenza, and was confined to my bed for *eighteen weeks* thereafter. Subsequently I was very weak, and could get up no strength. What little food I forced down (having no appetite) gave me *excruciating pain*, so that I was afraid to eat. I came to be exceedingly weak and had frequent attacks of dizziness. I was worn almost to a skeleton, and none thought I would recover.

"In June, 1892, Mr. Smith, a friend of ours, recommended me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup, which I at once procured of Mr. George Coombs, the chemist in Hucknall. After taking it for only one week I felt greatly benefited. I could eat better, and food ageeed with me. Continuing with the Syrup I grew stronger and stronger, and soon felt even better than before I was attacked by the influenza. You are free to print this statement if you wish to do so. (Signed) (Mrs.) Ruth Halliday, 44, High Street, Hucknall Torkard, Nottingham, March 19th, 1895."

Intense pain may or may not indicate urgent danger to life, but it is hard to bear, and very exhausting just the same. In cases of rheumatic gout (Mrs. Rogers) the pain is caused by a poisonous acid in the tissues, originally produced by the decomposition of food in the stomach—indigestion or dyspepsia. The same poison acting on the liver and kidneys creates the other symptoms mentioned. In the case of Mrs. Halliday the ailment was dyspepsia, which in the first place *invited* influenza, and then remained to torment her.

It is best and easiest to *prevent* pain by using Mother Seigel's Syrup *immediately* when the slightest illness appears.

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